

# ANANIAS' DAUGHTER

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ALICE GARDEN





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BY

ALICE GARDEN



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## Ananias' Daughter





# ANANIAS' DAUGHTER

## I

Oh, dear! Now Aunt Annameel had gone and made this one too long, just like all the others! You see, she always made them exactly like the pattern, so that the first season they invariably were much too long, while the second year, what with shrinking in the wash and Barbara Ann's natural growth, they were sure to be quite as much too short.

Brown calico, too—such a dingy, dunduckety brown, with little reddish spots; it would wear, Aunt Annameel had said when she brought the material home from the Boston store, and besides, it wouldn't show the dirt. Barbara would have liked to argue that point. If the dirt were there, why shouldn't it show? But she held her peace, because one didn't argue with Aunt Annameel; and hoped against the weight of past experience that the pattern might just happen to be the right length this time!

And now the dress was made; straight up-and-down, without sign of tuck or ruffle, and quite innocent of starch. Barbara, surveying its plainness, sighed deeply. She adored starch and ruffles. With all her might she longed to be garbed like the two little girls who had paused outside the gate in the hedge and now stood staring in at her, wide-eyed, exactly as they might

have gazed at some strange and fearsome beast in its cage at the zoo.

"Ss-ssh! Lookit, Bessie! D'you know what she is? *I* do! She's a *Poornorfum!*" This from one of the little girls outside, in an awed whisper that easily reached the ears of the little girl inside, and indeed might have done so had much more than the width of the mangy hedge separated them.

"Is she, *honest?*"

"Uh-huh."

"How kin yuh tell?"

" 'Cause she ain't got nice pretty clo'es like us. 'Nanyhow my Momma said she was. So!"

That, of course, settled it; till, as an afterthought, the one in blue: "Say, Stella, now look-it! What is a poor—a poornuff—you know. That thing you said."

The one in pink turned up a scornful nose. "Huh! If I didn't know what a poornorfum is! It's a—now—poornorfum that lives in a norfum-silun!" she emerged triumphant.

"What's a norfumsilun?" demanded Bessie.

"Why, Bessie Paige! You've seen 'em lotsa times! They go out walking ev'ry day, two by two, and Sisters in front and behind."

"Whose sisters?"

"Oh, my goodness! Not anybody's sisters, *silly!* Just church Sisters, I mean. *You* know—Cafflicks."

"Oh!" Then, dubiously: "But, Stella, what's she in there for, if she lives in a nor—norfum-silun?"

"I dunno." Gloom descended. "'Nless'n maybe"—brightening—"maybe she was bad or sumpthin' and they made her go an' stay in that

ole house in there. They's two awful ole witches lives in that house, too. They eat little girls—my brother said so!”

“Oh—oooh!” Smothered squeals, a flirt and scurry of ruffled skirts both pink and blue; swift scampering of well-shod little feet; and through the hedge a very wistful “poornorfum” gazed after the two flying figures, veritable birds of paradise in her childish eyes.

Again Barbara looked down at the queer little frock she had just donned, as per Aunt Anna-meel's instructions, after her Saturday afternoon bath. If it had mortified her before, now it was abhorrent beyond words. It must be, she decided, one of those “bommanashuns unto the Lord,” that Aunt Annameel always called the things she didn't like; like the Hendrickson boy and Mis' Joneses old red rooster.

And not alone her dress. Everything about her was so different, and so queer! Her hair, for instance. Barbara knew that it, too, was utterly and entirely wrong. Little girls of that day—it was the summer of 1886—wore long curls to the waist; or if nature, artfully aided by strips of rag and a wet hair brush, still refused to bow to fashion's mandate, yet all was not lost. Long yellow, brown or auburn strands, chillingly damp, could be braided tightly at night, and in the morning combed out to almost unbelievable crimpiness. Barbara's hair was very dark and very straight, and she wore it cut off short at her neck, much as children wear their hair nowadays; but how dreadfully dowdy it did look—in 1886!

There were other matters, too, concerning sashes and hair ribbons and a truly gold ring with a blue stone in it, like the one Grandma



Ferriss had when she was a little girl no bigger than Barbara Ann. (She had let Barbara try it on one day, and it was exactly the right size!)—And petticoats that stuck out all around and had ruffles on them and lace on the edge of the ruffles. And—oh, such lots of things!

So that altogether it was a pensive and slightly melancholy little person who turned at last and clumped toward the house. Yes, clumped. Barbara never skipped nor scampered nor pattered. She didn't know how to skip, and her shoes were never just right for scampering and pattering. When new they clumped because they were too large, and when old they stumped because they were too small. This pair clumped wearisomely; a fault somewhat mitigated, to be sure, by their delightful shiningness, and that delicious *smell* new shoes always have. *You* know!

So Barbara clumped over the uneven bricks to the shabby old house, set far back from the street and half concealed by a riot of shrubbery. Up the steps and across the narrow sloping porch, the weatherbeaten door creaking at her touch, the little girl made for the "sett'n-room," sure of finding Grandma Ferriss in her low chair by the window—almost the only window in the house which was not kept closely shuttered day and night. You see, Mis' Cap'n Sickles, who lived next door, did nothing else from morning till night 'cept peek out from behind her curtains to see what was going on over to the Ferrisses. That is what Aunt Annameel believed, and had finally persuaded Grandma Ferriss, though Grandma and the Cap'n's wife had been very good friends indeed, once upon a time. And that



ole Mis' Black, on the other side, wasn't much better, it seemed.

But this one window, facing the street, was Grandma's conning tower. From it, herself unseen, she observed the comings and goings of the little world about her, in which she had no part. Here she would sit by the hour in almost unbroken silence, save for occasional comment uttered half to herself, half to Aunt Annameel. "That looks some like Em D'remus, ridin' out with her beau. . . . I heard tell they was goin' to get married this summer. . . . I guess the Joneses have got company . . . the shades is up in the parlor, looks 's if. . . . Laws sakes! That must be Mis' Parkinses new hired girl, all diked out in a green dress . . . " And Aunt Annameel, clucking heavily back and forth in the old Boston rocker, would respond "Do tell!" or "I wan' to know!" at appropriate intervals; or maybe only grunted.

Today, however, Grandma was alone, which suited Barbara very well; it was so much harder to ask questions with Aunt Annameel about. Aunt Annameel had a way of thumping one's head with her thimble, or if she didn't happen to be wearing a thimble, with her knuckle, which was nearly as hard, as a reminder that little girls should be seen and not heard. And Barbara did want to know about witches, and whether they really ate little girls, and why those delectable beings in ruffles and ribbons had thought Grandma and Aunt Annameel were witches, as they had said. Obviously Aunt Annameel couldn't be one—she was much too fat. Not jolly-and-rosy fat like Mrs. Fromholz, the baker's wife, but thick-and-heavy fat, from the habit of taking her exercise

in the Boston rocker almost exclusively. And as for Grandma Ferriss, she certainly had none of the rowdy characteristics of such witches as Barbara had met, pictorially. Although her eyes were black and her face thin and a trifle high nosed, her expression was far less ribald; and there is no doubt that she would have considered straddling a broomstick an unseemly posture, and most unladylike.

Grandma Ferriss was an erect, rather severe little old woman, who in *her* youth had been taught to be seen and not heard, and who had not departed from it now that she was old. It was told that when her elder sister, Aunt Lavinia Beebe, now long dead, used to visit her in years gone by, the two would sit rocking happily in their little old splint-bottomed chairs, neither speaking a word for hours at a time, but each declaring with gentle fervor, at Aunt Lavinia's departure, that they had had *such* a good visit! She was silent almost to grimness with strangers, and rarely demonstrative even toward the little granddaughter whom she really loved very much, but Barbara was quick to divine her affection, and it was to her she took the small problems of her usually uneventful days.

It might be that old Mrs. Ferriss had ideas of her own as to the proper upbringing of little Barbara Ann, ideas which she hesitated to set before her daughter, perhaps feeling as Barbara did that one couldn't argue with Aunt Annameel. Arguing with Aunt Annameel was something like trying to pick up a robust three-year-old who has discovered the trick of making himself *limp* all over. So Grandma didn't often assert herself, even in Barbara's behalf; not that she saw any

real need of it, of course. To Grandma Ferriss a little girl who had enough to eat and whose clothes were clean and whole "did well enough," she s'posed. In her seclusion she knew naught of fluffy locks and billowing petticoats, and play-mates and such. Her own little-girlhood lay so far, far back in the dim past; perhaps it hadn't been a very gay one either, in those long-ago days up in York State, when the country was new, and young and old together must shoulder the burdens of the pioneer. Perhaps Grandma had only forgotten.

The old lady looked grimmer than ever at Barbara's tale of the loud-whispered chatter beyond the hedge. She wanted very much to do something about it, but what or how, she hadn't the faintest notion. However, she *was* able to dispose of the witch question, and did so to Barbara's complete satisfaction—and relief. It would have been unpleasant, and perhaps awkward, to have to go on living with a witch family of cannibalistic tastes! And she ran out again contentedly, to her play; but in the "middle garden" this time, far from the hedge and the box-bordered paths of the "front dooryard."

Now this big neglected yard of old Mrs. Ferriss' was really a very wonderful place indeed, or had been in the happy long ago when Grandfather Ferriss was alive, and kept the shrubbery trimmed and the grass smooth, the flower beds weedless and the fences in repair. To little Barbara Ann it was fairyland even now. Like all Gaul, which was to cause her considerable vexation in later years, it was divided into three parts. The first, that part immediately surrounding the house, was known as the "dooryard," and there



had been a formal garden of old-fashioned flowers in front, and in back a grassy place where Grandma Ferriss—"young Mrs. Ferriss" then—used to spread her snowy linen to dry, the while it bleached to still more dazzling whiteness. Behind this, a little gate in the low picket fence, now weatherworn and overgrown with vines, opened into the "middle garden," where a long arbor led to a summer-house at the end of its vista of green. The grape vines, once the pride of Grandfather Ferriss' heart, had "petered out" through neglect, until now but a few straggly bunches ripened annually, a travesty on the luscious Concords and Niagaras that should have been. And sour! Ugh! Barbara knew! Still, while very small and green they did quite well for peas or beans, in Barbara's scheme of household economy; or grown larger, they would serve as onions or lemons or plums, according to the need.

The summer-house, formerly a vine-shaded retreat, sweet with honeysuckle, gorgeous with the purple of clematis and the orange red of the trumpet vine, was now so overrun with the rank growth of two score years that little Barbara Ann was obliged to push her way through the tangle of leaves and branches that choked the entrance; but once inside—what a fairy bower for a little girl of five, going on six! So thick was the mass of vines that only an occasional sunbeam penetrated the dusky interior. The thick green walls filtered the light of the blazing midsummer day to a dim, cool twilight. Vivid moss spread a carpet of Oriental softness upon the brick flooring, and birds nested unafraid amid the dense foliage overhead. Here it was that Barbara brought her treasures when all the other dear delights of the

old neglected garden palled. Here she played for hours with her beloved Daisy Rose of the battered wooden head and painted complexion showing the ravages of a too strenuous existence; with black Dinah, made of yarn, with very red worsted lips; and with the bleached clam shells, the colored pebbles, and the few odds and ends of broken table-ware which added glamour to her little world of make-believe.

In the "middle garden," too, were a stunted and discouraged peach tree; berry bushes, and currants, black, white and crimson. In earlier years these had furnished Grandma's pantry with preserves and "jell," the neatly labeled jars standing in serried ranks on the upper shelves; now the little fruit that ripened provided sundry tea parties for Barbara Ann and her family of dolls. And here, close beside the arbor, was Grandma's bed of herbs; Barbara knew them all and loved their spicy fragrance—spearmint and sage, anise and coriander, bergamot and summer savory, the whitey-green catnip and the umbrella-like clusters of caraway seed.

The farther enclosure, reached by another sagging gate in a fence more rickety than the first, had been a kitchen garden, and was still so designated, though long since abandoned to weeds and underbrush. Even here Barbara found material for her play: the pods of the milkweed, stuffed with glistening floss; big rough mullein leaves for doll blankets; feathery grasses and tall spikes of plantain-weed, all helped beguile the long summer afternoons and sometimes made her quite forget that she was a "poornorfum," and not like anybody else in the whole wide world.

What strange fancies wove themselves in Bar-



bara's busy little brain as she played about this threefold paradise, none might know. So long as she played quietly and didn't get herself dirty, no one inquired as to her games; her mental processes had about as much interest for her elders as those of Daisy Rose herself. And having learned that any notice from Aunt Annameel was quite likely to be of an unfavorable nature, Barbara played quietly and didn't get herself dirty. Well, not so *very* dirty, anyway!

Barbara couldn't have explained to Aunt Annameel—oh, dear, no! nor even to Grandma, about the gates—the gates between the gardens. How, when you opened a gate and passed through, it was like beginning another day, and the gate closing behind you shut out yesterday as if it had never been. Though Barbara had this advantage, that she could open the gate of yesterday and go back in, if she wanted to! The quaint fancy had grown from her habit of playing all day in one garden, not running from one to another; till she came to think of the one she was in as “today's garden,” and the one she had played in the previous day as “yesterday's garden.” She used to wonder a little about tomorrow's garden, and how it was that she never could get around to play in it; for of course when tomorrow came it wasn't tomorrow any more, but today, and its garden was today's garden, the same as usual!

“Tomorrow,” to Barbara Ann, was ever a far country, tantalizingly remote, separated from today by a broad black river of sleep and by a vast mountain range of burdensome tasks, over which she must toil each day. Not till afternoon did Barbara's play-day begin; for mornings rain or shine, summer and winter, there was no play for

her until her tasks were done. There were a-b-c's to be learned, and then a-b, ab, and b-a, ba, b-e, be, b-o, bo—a dribble of meaningless sounds that brought to the little brain only bewilderment, but which must have been the right way to learn to read, because Aunt Annameel had learned that way, and she read a very great deal, mostly in a large black book without any pictures in it.

After the reading lesson Barbara must do her "stent" with her needle. She was making a patchwork quilt, setting the squares of dull calico together with "over 'n' over" stitches, none too even but very, very painstaking; indeed, at her present rate of progress the quilt would be finished, presumably, by the time Barbara was ninety! And she must learn a verse of Scripture for the next Sunday. Oh, yes, Aunt Annameel was very strict about that; but the verses she selected, being suited to her adult intelligence rather than to Barbara's childish mind, were a source of wonder and perplexity to the little girl, and did not materially aid in her comprehension of Holy Writ. For instance, this morning it had been "And God looked upon the earth and behold it was krupt for all flesh had krupted His way upon the earth Jenny's is six and twelve." Barbara wanted to ask about "krupted," but had found that Aunt Annameel's explanations were apt to be rather more puzzling than the thing she explained, and Barbara's last state would be more befogged than her first. Besides, it would take time, precious time that might be used to better advantage, she thought; say in picking daisies to make a lemon m'rang pie, like the one Grandma made once when Uncle Ben came on a visit. You know, you filled a little dish with the finely crum-



bled yellow centers; that was the lemon part, and you heaped the white petals on top, and that was the m'rang. That is the way Barbara made hers, though of course, Grandma had used really lemons an' everything.

Sundays, though, were the worst. To be sure there were no lessons nor sewing, but the six verses for the week must be repeated correctly, and then Barbara Ann had to sit quite still while Aunt Annameel read from the big black book; after which they all got up and turned around and knelt down facing their chairs, while Aunt Annameel prayed a very long prayer. It seemed to Barbara's aching knees that the carpet of good "body Brussels" didn't really mitigate the hardness of the boards beneath to any great extent, though it had fascinating red roses on it, not much larger than Barbara's head. In imagination the little girl picked many a Brobdingnagian bouquet from that carpet, while Aunt Annameel's heavy voice droned on and on—

Aunt Annameel always had a great deal to say to the Lord, apparently; and having begun with "Lord, Thou knowest all things—" she would go on to tell Him ever so many things which it seemed He didn't know after all—or maybe He had forgotten; it was all very puzzling. Barbara liked much better the prayer Grandma had taught her, beginning "Our Father," though she didn't really understand much of that except the part about giving us our daily bread; but someway when she was saying it, as she did every night—well, 'most every night—she didn't have that *scared* feeling, as she usually did when she thought about God. God, you know, punished you frightfully if ever you did the least wrong; and

you couldn't hope to hide it from Him, either. No, indeed! He was sure to find it out somehow, and always He told Aunt Annameel, and she spanked you.

Poor little Barbara Ann! It was long years ere she ceased entirely to regard her Creator as a sort of super-being (with a beard), solely devoted to wrath and vengeance and to sending down rain when one wanted to play in the garden. Long, too, ere she quite lost the conviction that He came down from Heaven each Sunday morning and stood behind Aunt Annameel's big rocking chair, invisible to Barbara because of her blackness of heart, but seen of Aunt Annameel—for that is where Aunt Annameel always looked when she prayed. You can see that Barbara was well grounded in the doctrine of a "personal" Deity! As to the twin doctrine of a personal Devil, that had been clinched to a certainty long ago, by means of a horridly fascinating book with which she was wont to while away the tedium of Sunday afternoons. The book was "Il Inferno," by one Dante, its illustrations inspired by the religious beliefs of the early nineteenth century—strong meat, one might think, for a little girl of five, going on six!

The one thing Barbara really liked about Sunday was the dinner. They had chicken almost always, and mashed potato and gravy and currant jelly and celery and pudding, in festive contrast to their week-day menus, which were apt to be sketchy affairs running largely to crackers. Fortunately Aunt Annameel considered it a serious infraction of the fourth commandment to do any cooking on the Sabbath; so on that day Grandma Ferriss betook herself to the kitchen, and there

sinned happily among the pots and pans, with the avowed purpose of "settin' down to 'one good meal of vittles, anyhow"; Aunt Annameel partaking quite as heartily as the rest, of the wholesome, appetizing and well-cooked fruit of her mother's iniquity!

But dinner, even such a dinner as Grandma's skill might achieve, could be eaten but once; and then Sunday afternoon stretched its dreary length over the hours till bedtime. Play was banned, yet with compensations; for sometimes, when in particularly genial mood, Aunt Annameel would draw pictures on the little girl's slate. Not frivolous things like Cinderella's coach or Puss in Boots or Little Miss Muffet. Mercy, no! Aunt Annameel's drawings always aimed to inculcate a moral lesson. Her favorite represented a poorly clad child toiling up a precipitous hillside toward a gate in the clouds. It was a regular gate with pickets, and had rays all around it like the sun "drawing water." Below would be shown a gentle declivity down which strolled a well-dressed child with curls, seeming quite unaware that Satan—horns, hoofs, tail and pitchfork all complete, and grinning most amiably—awaited her coming in the extreme lower left-hand corner of the slate!

And occasionally, when Barbara had recited her verses nicely, she might go into the long, dim parlor and look at the wax fruit and flowers in their deep, glassed-in frames; at the wreath, every bit made of hair; and at the wonderful picture, hand painted in "light and dark black," of a stupendous mountain flattened against the sky, while 'neath the weeping willow in the foreground a lady some nine feet tall, with dreadfully mussed-



up hair, clung to an inebriated tombstone: all these things being the work of Aunt Annameel in her youth.

What other furnishings the room contained Barbara could only guess, so heaped and cluttered was it with old newspapers and periodicals. In twenty years, at least, none had been destroyed, till the accumulation had overflowed attic and storeroom and a clothes-press or two; and now here, besides being piled high on tables, chairs and sofa, they were stacked upon the floor along each wall to a level with Barbara Ann's little inquisitive nose, while in one corner rose a huge mound half-way to the ceiling. Truly the parlor was a fascinating place, albeit not too cheerful.

The family did not go to church. Grandma Ferriss' age and her habit of seclusion combined to keep her at home, while Aunt Annameel had decided that the orthodox Presbyterianism in which she had been reared did not offer suitable nourishment for her peculiar spiritual needs, and had allied herself with a small band of fervid worshippers calling themselves The Children of Light. They met Sunday afternoons at "Hepzibah House," the home of two elderly sisters of the cult, and sometimes Barbara went with her aunt to the meetings. On the whole she found it quite exciting, though she did have to sit still, and all the people seemed to feel very badly about something. At first Barbara had thought it might be stomach-ache, because they groaned a great deal and now and then one would jump right up and shout "Glory!" very loud, or "Glory, glory, Halleluia!"—sort of happified, the way *she* felt when she had had a stomach-ache, and it had gone away again. But then, it didn't seem likely that

they *all* would have stomach-ache *every* Sunday, so probably it was something else, after all.

Aunt Annameel did those things at home a great deal, too—the groaning, you know, and saying “Lord, Lord!” and “Glory, Halleluia!” every little while. But Grandma never did, and sometimes when Aunt Annameel said them, Grandma would make a funny noise back in her nose, something like a horse, Barbara thought, and wondered why.

There is no denying it—Aunt Annameel certainly was queer. Even her name was queer—you may have noticed. Ann Amelia she had been christened. All the Ferrisses had names like that, good old-fashioned names that you could get your teeth into; none of these wishy-washy Minnies and Mays, Florries and Nellies and Lotties and Carries that abounded in the middle '80s. Grandma's own name was Sally Ann, and there was another daughter who lived “out West” (in Ohio!); Lucinda Jane Adams now, wife of the Uncle Ben who had been the occasion of the lemon m'rang pie. Only because Barbara's own mother was the baby of the family had the sturdy “Augusta Sophia” written in the big Bible been softened to Sophie. Even so, her name was somewhat of a trial to her and when a wee girl-baby came to her and her young husband, and Grandma Ferriss claimed the privilege of naming the first grandchild, she pleaded weakly for something more modern and less—well, *Ferrissy*—than the Susan or Rebecca or Emmeline that her mother at first proposed. She contrived to ward off an imminent “Keturah,” the nightmare of “Philena Abigail,” and the horrors of Hannah and of Hul-dah; but succumbed at last to “Barbara Ann,” as

being better than she had any reason to expect. Perhaps they might manage to ignore the Ann part of it, and Barbara alone really wasn't so bad—

It was the little girl herself who settled it, with her earliest lisping words; her name was Bobby-ann!

Barbara Ann was still a baby when the accident occurred which left her orphaned; an accident only too common in those days, and somewhat less than rare in these, despite our vaunted progress. David Thair, bringing home his little family after a day at Mother Ferriss' in town, had driven upon the railroad track in the path of the "Seaboard Limited," some two hours late. A heavy freight, rumbling and clattering away in the opposite direction, drowned the noise of the approaching express, even as a dense growth of underbrush hid it from view—

When the train crew came to gather up the mangled bodies and the splintered wreck of the Thairs' light carriage, the baby was found lodged in a bush beside the track, unharmed beyond a few scratches. Whether Spohie Thair, in the one frantic moment before she was hurled into eternity, had been able to toss her baby to safety, or whether the impact had thrown the light body far to one side, can never be known. Baby Barbara, none the worse for her experience and too young to know aught of the terrible loss she had sustained, was taken in charge by Aunt Annameel and the heartbroken grandmother; the former accepting the responsibility as a none too pleasant duty, to be performed nevertheless according to the leadings of her conscience, while her mother's attitude was one of nervous terror lest harm be-



fall the child—a fear which caused her to keep Barbara closely at home, and found expression in constant cautionings. From her first toddling steps, whether she walked or ran, jumped or climbed or capered, Grandma Ferriss' sharp "T'care! T'care!" rang in her ears; ears fortunately rendered dull by the eternal repetition, else the little Barbara Ann might well have grown still more timid and shrinking than her solitary life made inevitable.

Barbara was neither neglected nor really unhappy, yet hers was not the healthily normal existence of the little girls she envied outside the hedge, walking in pairs with arms entwined, chased by little boys in Fauntleroy suits, or running to meet "Poppa" on his return from work at supper time. Most of all she longed for "somebody to play with," but Aunt Annameel simply would not have a lot of strange brats nosing 'round, and then rushing off home to tattle everything they saw, and that was all there was *to it*! So Barbara Ann, and Daisy Rose, and old Dinah, played by themselves in "today's garden," watching rather wistfully the gay little butterflies in starchy white and blue and pink, who ever flitted by the gate in the hedge, but never, never entered.

## II

The "queerness" of Aunt Annameel was no new thing, but it did seem to be growing on her. Even Grandma Ferriss and Barbara Ann, accustomed as they were to her eccentricities, could see it; and to such acquaintances as still ventured to "call on" the two women, the fact had long been patent. Nowadays but few came. It is disconcerting, to say the least, when in the midst of an account of Johnny's mumps, or of Lilly Frost's wedding, or the split in the Methodist Ladies' Aid, to pull up against a blank stare and an inquiry as to the state of your soul. "Are you Prepared?" Aunt Annameel would ask in sepulchral tones. Or "These are the Last Days: are you going to be caught up with the saints?"

"My goodness, I *hope* not!" ejaculated Cousin Mary Lane on one occasion. "I should be scared to *death*!" Cousin Mary was wholly orthodox, and took her Bible quite literally; but dear me, she was so taken aback!

As a relation on the Ferriss side, Cousin Mary rather made a point of being as friendly as "dear Cousin Daniel's" family would let her. Now even she had stopped coming. "That Annameel Ferriss gives me the *creeps*!" she had declared in exasperation, after the last visit. "And *such* a looking place! I don't see how Cousin Sally Ann *stands* it! And oh, dear, that poor baby of Sophie's too; it's a *shame*! The way she's



dressed, and always playing by herself, and all—”

It must be confessed that Cousin Mary Lane's italics did small injustice to Aunt Annameel's housekeeping. She never had had any talent or liking for it, and until the marriage of her sister Lucinda Jane some fifteen years before, had concerned herself not at all with the affairs of the house. But with Lucinda's going, her mother's not too robust health compelled Ann Amelia to assume in a bored, haphazard way, the household burdens her sister had carried so blithely. Aunt Annameel's method was to do as little as possible each day, with an occasional grand clean-up when things got so bad that even *she* could endure it no longer. These spasms of housewifery, however, had grown less frequent and less comprehensive with the passing of the years, till they had come to be almost as purely legendary as the operation of sweeping cobwebs from the sky. Aunt Annameel had more important matters to occupy her mind and her time. She had her soul to look after, she said. It would be a terrible thing for her, if the Great Day found her unprepared. So she spent long hours each day over her Bible, and other long hours in meditation, swaying loudly and rhythmically in the old Boston rocker, the dust and litter growing ever deeper 'round her as she sat. She said she didn't mind it, because she dwelt above the stars—Heaven was her home—but Grandma said it was because she was lazy.

Of late she had made a practise of going about the house with arms upraised, palms uppermost—“receiving the spirit,” she called it. But it was when she started “speaking in tongues” that

Grandma Ferriss became worried, and began to recall a bad fall her daughter had had in her childhood, and to wonder whether Aunt Annameel were really "quite right." This "speaking in tongues" did sound rather alarming. It reminded Grandma Ferriss of a dispute she had overheard aboard the "Sea Bird," on a trip to the city some years before, between an ornate and unclean gypsy and a couple of Norwegian deck hands. By their gestures, it apparently had to do with the matter of chaining the gypsy's several dogs. They all talked at once, and very loud, each in his own tongue, and the dogs in *their* tongue, and the noise was not unlike that made by Aunt Annameel, Grandma thought; though Aunt Annameel assured her it was as plain as a-b-c to those who were Anointed with the Oil of Understanding. Whereupon Grandma spoke tartly of the benefits to be derived from an anointing with soap and water, and Aunt Annameel retired to the Boston rocker to meditate or, as Grandma said, to sulk.

Having so much on her mind naturally made Aunt Annameel dreadfully absent minded about other things—unimportant matters like cooking and marketing and the sewing on of buttons. . . . There was the time the chicken for Sunday's dinner disappeared so unaccountably. Mr. Krauss' boy had handed it to Aunt Annameel herself at the kitchen door. Came Sunday morning, and time to prepare the plump fowl for fricassee. Grandma Ferriss was going to make biscuits to go with it; my, what biscuits Grandma could make! Inspection of the ice box, however, revealed not so much as a single pinfeather, though Aunt Annameel was *sure* she had put the chicken on the

ice the very first thing. High and low they searched; no chicken. They had biscuits and butter and sliced tomatoes and "Bolivars" for dinner, and Mis' Cap'n Sickles' old yellow cat was made to shoulder the blame, along with his other iniquities.

Within a few days a curious odor became noticeable in the kitchen. Soon it permeated the whole house, by which time it had ceased to be merely curious. Aunt Annameel opened a window or two, and old Mis' Black came to complain. . . .

On a Thursday afternoon some three weeks later, Aunt Annameel made the annoying discovery that practically every garment in the house, and all the bed and table linen, was soiled; even the red-and-white patterned cloth on the kitchen table where they breakfasted, could not be turned another time. There was no help for it—Aunt Annameel had to do some washing. Ho, hum! and oh, dear! Well, then, if it *must* be done! With a prodigious amount of sighing and grumbling Aunt Annameel gathered about her the paraphernalia of wash-day. She dragged the old copper boiler forth from its concealment, removed the lid . . .

Oh, that chicken! That anciently defunct fowl! That horror of feathers and smell! . . . Followed certain necessary rites with chloride of lime and the coal shovel . . . and the absolution of Mis' Sickles' old yellow cat; even Aunt Annameel must concede his innocence, on the strength of the evidence right under her nose!

The affair of the bacon was less tragic, though smelly enough in its way. To be sure Aunt Annameel didn't put it away in the wash boiler; her



fantastic blunders followed no precedent. She hung the flitch of bacon by its loop of string on the towel rack over the stove, after taking down a "tea towel" wherewith to wipe the dust from a seldom used "spider"; which as you know if you ever have dwelt in certain rural communities of these United States, is not an insect with eight legs, but an iron frying pan with three, or even with none at all. Aunt Annameel then folded the towel very neatly, laid it in the "spider" aforesaid, and set it over the fire to fry, while she went into the sitting room to meditate in the Boston rocker.

Soon the towel was done to a turn; but Aunt Annameel continued to meditate, while it turned from brown to black, with a row of tiny sparks crawling round the edge; and instead of the appetizing odor of sizzling bacon, the atmosphere grew thick with the acrid smoke of burning rags.

Another day it was the potatoes, which were to be baked for dinner. This time there were no fatalities, but likewise no baked potatoes. Aunt Annameel built up a good hot fire, washed the potatoes, and put them to bake—but not in the oven. Instead she carried them "up attic," and with infinite pains deposited them in Grandfather Ferriss' old "hair trunk"—so called because it wore its covering of red and white spotted cow-hide *au naturel*; and here after many months Aunt Cindy found them, shriveled and dry, very mummies of potatoes; found them, and wondered—

Such minor idiosyncracies as shoveling coal into the bread box, and wearing her bonnet to bed, were too frequent to cause undue excitement. Grandma Ferriss and Barbara Ann had even come

to contemplate almost unmoved, the spectacle of Aunt Annameel going about the house minus divers portions of her attire, such as dress-waist or stockings, when, as often happened, she would be too absorbed in matters not of this world, to remember to put them on.

The climax came one terribly sultry night when Barbara Ann, restless with the heat, had got up from her little bed in Grandma's room to get herself a drink at the faucet in the hall. Almost at once Grandma Ferriss was awakened by a shrill scream of terror. Shriek after shriek assailed her ears as she scrambled out of bed; why, whatever *ailed* the child? Grandma herself could have screamed, but had not the power. She was faint with dread of what might be outside that bedroom door—burglars, flames, a little body hurtling down the dark stairway—where *was* that doorknob?

At last! The door swung wide, and on the threshold Grandma collided with Barbara's little night-gowned figure, which laid hold of her and clung tight, sobbing frantically. And small wonder, for in the doorway opposite loomed a most terrifying apparition; Aunt Annameel, to be sure, but such an Aunt Annameel as neither Barbara nor her grandmother had ever seen.

Apparently, she, too, suffered from the heat, and was about to sally forth in search of a cooler spot than her stuffy, close-shuttered bedroom, in which to read and pray. Her attire expressed haste and preoccupation and a lofty disregard of conventionalities. Her ragged nightgown reached but little below her knees, revealing an expanse of what were known in those days as *limbs*; which same were corpulent and not too shapely and ended in knitted bedroom slippers of a poisonous



green tint, a bulbous great toe protruding from each like a toadstool from a mossy stump.

Over her disreputable gown, in lieu of negligee or "dressing sack," she had donned a yet more disreputable purple "basque"—the tight-fitting dress-waist of the day—wrong side out! Above this her calico apron was pinned shawl-wise, the strings dangling almost at her heels; from beneath the cowl of a huge sunbonnet her wispy grey hair, damp with perspiration, strung weirdly about her face; and by way of a finishing touch, from head to foot she was smudged with some blackish substance, like soot.

It was, in fact, lampblack. During some cold winter season long past, Aunt Annameel had striven to heat her room by the aid of a large kerosene lamp, which she had lit and then trustingly left to its own devices. For an hour or so it smoked away right merrily, while the room and all it contained took on an inky, oily coating which Aunt Annameel hadn't yet "got around" to clean; and tonight, fumbling for matches wherewith to light her candle, she had received a liberal contribution on hands and clothing. Some of this she had transferred to her face, her left eye in particular being in total eclipse, her nose a mere blur.

To add to her general grotesqueness, she stood with hands uplifted in the attitude of "receiving the Spirit"—a lighted candle in one, and in the other—the kitchen poker! Aunt Annameel, like many another who claims implicit trust in Divine Providence, was very much afraid of burglars, and never moved about the house at night unarmed!

For a moment Grandma Ferriss gazed speech-

lessly at the fantastic figure in the flickering candlelight. Then she found her voice and, as is not unusual with silent people when they do speak, she used it with emphasis and authority.

"For conscience' sake, Ann Amelia Ferriss! What *be* you a-doin'?" she demanded. To which responded Aunt Annameel, her speech reflecting as usual the idioms of her familiar Book: "Can't you see that I be about the Lord's business?"

"In that rig? No, I can't!" snapped Grandma Ferriss; "and what's more, if you can't get the Lord's business done in the daytime you better let somebody else do it that's got more gumption! Plain foolishness, that's all 'tis! Do you take off those things and wash your face and go back to your bed *to once*."

With one look at her mother's flashing black eyes and upright figure, Aunt Annameel turned, lowered candle and poker, and groaning heavily, went back into her room and closed the door. But not before Grandma had glimpsed, pinned for safe keeping to the rear of the reversed basque—the wire *bustle* which Aunt Annameel was wont to assume whenever the occasion demanded fashionable attire!

Shaking with excitement and half-hysterical mirth (on account of the bustle!), Grandma Ferriss drew Barbara into their own room and locked the door. She took the still whimpering little girl into her own big, feathery bed, soothing her with unaccustomed tenderness, the while she thought and planned. And the first faint streaks of dawn, stealing through the chinks of the broken shutters, softly touched the round face and the withered one, fast asleep at last. Grandma Ferriss had made up her mind!

### III

Having made up her mind, Grandma Ferriss lost no time in executing her plan. That afternoon she locked herself in her room for a season, and when she came forth sought out Barbara Ann in the garden. A letter was pressed furtively into the little girl's hand, the while she received minute whispered instructions as to how to reach the post-box on the corner, and what to do after she got there. It was the very first time Barbara ever had been sent on an errand, and she was ready to burst with pride. Not for worlds would she have betrayed Grandma's trust; to get that letter out of her possession Aunt Annameel would literally have had to tear her to bits!

But Aunt Annameel knew nothing of the letter, you may be sure, for Barbara kept it hidden in her dress when she passed the kitchen window, and Grandma Ferriss formed a rear-guard for the march to the gate. Once on the sidewalk Barbara dashed like a little brown streak for the mail-box and stood panting beside it, the letter clutched to her wildly thumping heart.

What an adventure! Oh, but suppose Aunt Annameel should come after her, and catch her before anyone came along who was big enough to reach that narrow green flap high above her head! Suppose—

"Why, hello, you funny little thing! Want me to mail that letter for you? Want to put it in the box yourself? Up you go! That's it, lift the handle. There you are! Well, and did you come



to post a letter all by yourself? My, my, what a big girl! What's your name, funnykins?"

The big, jolly voice didn't sound a bit like any voice Barbara had ever heard, and the big, jolly man who lifted her so easily and set her down so gently was quite different, too, from any man she ever had seen. Even his clothes were different—all black, and a queer straight-around collar, and his black vest came right up close to it, so you couldn't see any necktie. She stole another shy glance, and saw that his hair was red and that he had freckles on his nose. She wasn't a bit afraid. "My name is Bobbyann Thair," she answered politely. And then she was afraid, after all, for he had seized her arms so tight that it hurt, and was stooping to look into her face. He said something—very low—about God, Barbara thought, but wasn't quite sure.

Then he straightened up, but kept her hand in his as they walked on and Barbara thought he was going to cry; his eyes looked like that. Dear me, she *hoped* he wasn't. She must *say* something, and then maybe he wouldn't. "What's *your* name?" she ventured at length.

"They call me Father Christian," he answered very gently. "And this is where you live, isn't it?" Barbara wondered how he knew, as she passed through the gate he held open for her.

She often wondered about Father Christian in time to come, but it wasn't until she was quite grown up that she understood why he had acted so queerly that day. . . . It was not Barbara Ann Thair, but Sophie Ferriss' little girl, who had so upset this big man with the strong arms and the jolly voice. Because, long before there was any Father Christian, when he was just plain



red-headed, freckle-faced Peter Christian O'Connor, Peter and Sophie had been sweethearts. Of course there was furious parental opposition on both sides, Peter's mother having dedicated him to the church at a period far antedating any possible religious proclivities on his part; when in fact all his ambitions, beyond that of obtaining suitable and sufficient nourishment at frequent intervals, were yet in abeyance. Likewise, whatever Mrs. Ferriss' plans for her daughter's future, they certainly did not include a husband of the Roman Catholic faith; her austere Calvinism holding all that pertained to the Church of Rome as of the devil and utterly to be abhorred.

The pressure from both sides had been too much for the young people, scarcely more than children as they were. So presently Peter O'Connor had gone away to learn how to become Father Christian and Sophie, after a year or so, had married the dark-eyed poet-farmer, David Thair. This was Father Christian's first home-coming in the ten years since Peter O'Connor, heartsick and half blinded with tears, had turned his back on love and its happiness. The encounter with Sophie Ferriss' orphaned baby had sorely shaken the priestly heart he had thought so serene and well-disciplined.

But from that hour Barbara Ann had a friend and champion who never failed her. If only he had suspected how very badly she was going to need one during the next few days!

Supper was ready when the little girl entered the house, and Aunt Annameel had a sharp reproof at her tongue's end. "Well, why'n the world didn't you come in when you were called? Where've you *been?*" she snapped, angrily.

Barbara looked hopefully at Grandma Ferriss, but she didn't seem to be paying any attention. And Aunt Annameel must not know about the letter; Grandma had said so. "I—I was playing down by the hedge," faltered Barbara Ann.

"You wasn't there when I looked. *Did you go outside?*" Aunt Annameel was very stern now.

"Y-yes, but only for a minute, Aunt Annameel! My ball—it rolled through—so I *had* to—"

Barbara really was doing very well, all things considered; till, alas! Nemesis, disguised as the grocer's boy, came knocking at the door.

Barbara had always rather liked this grocer's boy. His easy swagger, his loud and cheerful whistle, even the incomprehensible things he would call down to her from the dizzy eminence of his bicycle as he rode by the hedge, inspired her with admiration and respect. The mere fact that he could ride the thing at all entitled him, in Barbara's eyes, to a place among the immortals. She never could fathom what kept it up on edge that way, nor why he didn't go 'round with it. And that funny little wheel that trailed along behind, like a very small curled-up tail on a very big dog—

"Evenin', Mis' Ferriss. Evenin', Miss Anna-meel. Here's them crackers you ordered; we didn't have none this mornin'—they jest come in. Hullo there, Barb'ry! Wasn't you pretty fur away fr'm home jest now, 'way down by the corner? Well, I gotta git along. G'night, all!" And Nemesis, all unsuspecting, went his way, shrilly imploring the return of his Bonnie to him, to him, all the way to the gate.

But in the room he had left there was no sound. Barbara Ann shivered through eons of silence—silence that lay like a leaden weight on her heart.

Grandma Ferriss looked at her plate. Aunt Anna-meel looked at Barbara Ann. And nothing happened. Only silence.

By and by Barbara would have begun her supper, but things didn't seem to taste just right somehow. She decided she wasn't hungry, after all, so she sat very still until the others had finished, then tried to slip away to bed unseen. She almost thought she had succeeded, but Aunt Annameel's voice came floating over the banisters, hope-destroying, laden with dire significance: "Very well, then, Barb'ry Ann! You go right straight to bed; and we'll see about this *in the morning!*"

No printed word can convey the threat Barbara inferred from this last. To take her punishment forthwith and have done with it, that was no more than she had done lots of times; but here was a diabolical element of suspense, whether intentional or not on the part of Aunt Annameel. Poor Barbara Ann had all night long in which to speculate as to what dread form her punishment would take. Aunt Annameel was very clever indeed at devising the unusual in the way of correction.

So yet another night the little girl slept in her grandmother's bed, the old woman soothing her fears as best she could. "There, there, Barb'ry! Don't take on so; you just keep still and it'll be all right by and by. She shan't do anything very bad to you!"

Slightly comforted, Barbara fell at last into an uneasy slumber, broken by dreams of punishments many and varied, from the time-honored and not unaccustomed spanking, to being toasted on a



pitchfork over a pit of flames, like the pictures in the large thin book on the settin'-room table.

Morning came at last, yet all too soon. Barbara Ann went heavily downstairs and sought out Aunt Annameel in the kitchen, turning her back as usual to have her dress "buttoned up." No word was spoken. Breakfast was got through in the same chill silence. After breakfast Aunt Annameel went to a drawer in the old highboy that served as a buffet, and took out a sheet of cardboard with big black letters on it. Barbara could not read, so Aunt Annameel read it to her. And this is what it said: I AM A LYER. Aunt Annameel explained, too, just what a "lyer" was, and what became of little girls who were "lyers." Barbara felt relieved, in a measure; at any rate that part of her punishment was far enough in the future to lose some of its terrors!

Then Aunt Annameel, producing a piece of string, hung the placard securely around Barbara's neck. "You will wear that all day today and every day for a week, Barb'ry Ann," said Aunt Annameel, "and everybody who sees it will know *just what you are!*"

Oh, the bitter shame and humiliation of those next few days! The effort to keep her back always to the wall when anyone was near; the forgetting and starting out to play in the garden, and then remembering about Mis' Cap'n Sickles always peekin' through her curtains. Once Mis' Sickles had called Barbara to the fence and given her a cooky with a raisin in the middle; it was a good cooky, but Barbara hadn't mentioned it to Aunt Annameel. Barbara thought she would not like to have Mis' Cap'n Sickles know that she was a "lyer!"



Thus for three days of the interminable seven did the little Ancient Mariner strive to keep her albatross as much as possible from the public view. Aunt Annameel prayed for her vigorously night and morning, but otherwise paid little attention to her; Grandma Ferriss did not interfere, glad that the punishment was no worse; and on the fourth day—

## IV

When Barbara had worn the penitential placard for two whole days, the evening hour of seven, which saw it removed for the night, also saw Aunt Lucinda Jane Adams at her home in Ashtabula, Ohio, reading aloud to her husband a letter she had received that day:

“My dear Daughter I take my pen in hand to let you know that I am well,”—thus ran the stilted phrases—“and so is Ann Amelia I presume. Now Lucinda I want you should come home here right away. Ann Amelia is getting very Queer I can’t stand it like this any longer and I want you should come and set things to Rights. If Benj. can come too I Should be very pleased to have him make us a visit. We are all in usual health Hoping you are the same.

Yrs. Affectionately

Mother

Ps—Ann Amelia does not know that I write this. Come as quick as you can.”

Lucinda Adams and Ben, her husband, sat silent for a time. Then Uncle Ben, between puffs at his pipe: “I’ll bring down the trunk from the attic—shall I? Or will you take the big telescope bag?”

Aunt Lucinda rose and went to stand beside her husband’s chair. She laid an arm across his broad shoulders, just beginning to stoop a little; he drew her down and kissed her, holding her cheek close

to his for a long minute. Then she straightened up, speaking briskly.

"The telescope will do. When I get there—well, we will see what we see. You better go down to the depot, Ben, and see about trains; and you might stop in at Mrs. Truman's and arrange to get your meals there while I'm gone—"

The words trailed off into the kitchen, where Lucinda Jane was instantly at work, doing a dozen things at once, or so it seemed. Yet though she flew about with energy, it was nearly daylight when at last she lay down to snatch an hour's repose. And then there was the hurried breakfast, the still more hurried clearing up, and Uncle Ben's clumsy helpfulness, and a score of last directions about the cat and the parlor clock and the rose bushes and where to find the clean towels; and then in the cab on the way to the station, suddenly there was nothing left to be said; or rather, there were no end of things, very important, too, but neither could remember what they were.

. . . And then all the hurly-burly at the station; there was just time for a hasty kiss, a whispered good-bye, before Uncle Ben must jump from the already moving train.

"Write as soon as you get there!" "Yes, yes, I will!" through the open window; and Uncle Ben was left standing bareheaded on the platform, gazing disconsolately after the train which was bearing Aunt Lucinda "back East" to the little town of Red Haven on the Shrewsbury, where she had been born and bred, but which she had visited but seldom since her marriage.

In those days a railway journey from Ashtabula, Ohio, to the "Jersey" coast, was not a thing to be undertaken without good and sufficient



reason. Lucinda Jane's last trip east had been at the time of the tragic death of her sister Sophie, five years before. On that occasion her coming had been duly heralded by telegraph, and Ann Amelia had had time to make the house measurably presentable; anyway they were too dazed and grief-stricken to give much heed to matters of that sort. So Lucinda was all unprepared for the scene of desolation and wild disorder which greeted her when she opened the front door and entered the once-familiar "settin'-room."

"Well, well, Ma! How do you do, Annameel? . . . Well, for goodness' sake! . . . What in the *world* . . . What's going *on* here, anyway? Are you going to move? Or is it an earthquake, or *what?*"

"Cyclone" perhaps would have described it better. That very morning Aunt Annameel had decided to overhaul sundry closets and trunks and wardrobes in preparation for "Fall house cleaning," a ceremony that was much talked of annually, but which hadn't taken place in years. When Aunt Annameel *did* clean, she said, she liked to get right down to rock bottom and begin!

Unfortunately, that usually ended the matter; having begun, she straightway stopped again, her unwonted energy vanished like a spent bubble. Her utmost accomplishment was the hauling out of things that had lain in drawer and trunk ever since she could remember, inspecting them listlessly, and then returning them whence they came. Nothing was discarded, in fact there always seemed to be *more* things to put away—they never would fit in as they had before, and many had to be left out. Confusion piled on confusion.

Today every chair in the sitting-room was

heaped with antiquated garments; tables, mantelpiece and floor had each its burden of unfinished "fancy work," rolls of "pieces," ancient reticules, fans and shawls; bundles of outworn hosiery, packages of seeds, stacks of old letters; pasteboard boxes in all shapes and sizes and states of dilapidation, their contents bulging from broken lids. At least a dozen old umbrellas and sunshades sprawled in one corner, some minus handles, their coverings in rags; while from the chandelier hung by its knotted strings a "pair of stays" of the vintage of 1860!

"Just gettin' ready to clean house," Aunt Annameel explained; "I brought 'em in the settin'-room because it's cooler."

Lucinda Jane stared at her sister, at the old clothes, at the umbrellas and the dangling stays, then she dumped the contents of the nearest chair and sat down abruptly. "I'd use a shovel if I were you, Annameel!" she advised in a faint voice.

When she had recovered her breath and taken off her things, and had heard all about Grandma Ferriss' rheumatism and Aunt Annameel's trouble with her breathing, and had told how well Uncle Ben was doing in the hardware business, suddenly she started up. "Why, where's the baby?"

Nobody seemed to know. The house was ransacked and then the garden, but no Barbara Ann, though they looked everywhere, even in the cistern! Everywhere, that is, except under the big bed in the never-entered "spare room," where a little huddled bundle of misery crouched in trembling concealment!

Ever mindful of the brand she bore, Barbara had slipped discreetly up the backstairs at the sound of a strange voice, listening over the banister until she heard her grandmother address the newcomer as "Lucindy." Oh, oh! To have Aunt Lucinda, whom she hadn't ever seen "since she could remember," make her acquaintance with that badge of ignominy and degradation upon her—it was too much! For a wild minute she entertained the thought of tearing it off and hiding it where Aunt Annameel never, never could find it; but she knew Aunt Annameel *would* find it, or else would make another and perhaps worse one. So it was herself she hid, placard and all, under the big bed; and Aunt Lucinda it was who dragged her forth, sobbing bitterly, after days and days and *days*—oh, of course, not really! It only seemed so to Barbara Ann.

"Why, you precious baby! Whatever is the matter? Not afraid of Aunt Cindy, are you? Why, what's this? You're a *what*? A '*Lyer!*' Who said so? I don't believe it!" And in a twinkling off came the hateful thing, and was broken into a dozen bits in Aunt Cindy's strong, plump fingers.

The gate of Yesterday's Garden clicked shut behind Barbara Ann, and it was Another Day!



## V

Beset by next-morning doubts as to the reality of overnight events, Barbara was still dubious in regard to the albatross matter; but nothing was said about it at breakfast, so she didn't mention it either. A great peace had descended upon Barbara's heart; peace, and joy, and a rapturous content with the world as she found it. She was so happy! She wanted to jump around and wave her arms, and sing! And she did so, though handicapped by the fact that she knew but one song, and had to sing that one over and over. It was a song she had heard at Hepzibah House; Aunt Anna-meel sang it at home sometimes, too, so Barbara knew *most* of the words:

“This world's a-yowl-ling wil-der-ness,  
Thah yend ap-proach-eth fast;  
Righ zup, ye saints, the Lord to bless,  
This day may be your last!

This world's a-yowl-ling wil-der-ness,  
(Yum tum, te tum te tum)  
The saints will hear in bles-sed-ness  
Thah way-lings of the damn'd!

This world's a-yowl-ling wil-der-ness,  
(Yum tum, te tum te tum,  
Yum tum te tum, tum tum te tum)  
When all—our—bones—are—dust!”

Funny, how Aunt Cindy had got her face dirty so early in the morning. She washed it quickly at the sink, and had to keep the towel over it ever so long before it was dry again and being a very rough towel, it made her face quite red, like Barbara's own when she had scrubbed it *good*! And the cold water must have taken her breath away as it did Barbara's sometimes, for her voice was all quivery when she spoke to Aunt Annameel, and sounded cross besides. "Annameel Ferriss, if you say 'Now don't!' to that child one other time today, I'll—I'll *slap* you!" Yes, indeed, *to Aunt Annameel* she said it! Barbara heard, and waited for the lightning to strike; but the sky remained calm, the house still stood on its foundation, and Aunt Annameel went back to the Boston rocker!

Without demur, almost eagerly, in fact, Aunt Annameel had surrendered the keys of office to her sister, and was giving exclusive attention to the condition of her soul. Aunt Cindy went about the house whistling—how she *could* whistle!—to keep down the consternation in hers, and Grandma was in the kitchen making caraway-seed cookies. Truly it was a golden day to little Barbara Ann!

The coming of Aunt Cindy was like a wind from the sea at nightfall, after a day of land breeze. Literally, too, she brought ozone into the cluttered, musty rooms, for she hadn't been in the house an hour before every window that would open, *was* open. She started to open the shutters as well, but thought better of it. And now this morning she marched dauntlessly from room to room, considering where to begin. The dining-room was pretty bad, but the sitting-room was worse, owing to yesterday's "house cleaning;" and the kitchen—

"I *can't* do it alone—it would take a *year!*" she worried; "But, oh, dear, I do hate to let a stranger in on such a mess—" She opened the parlor door, and shut it again, gasping. "Ma," she called, "where's a scrubwoman we can get?"

Ma didn't know. Neither did Aunt Annameel. There were niggers, of course—"Well, what about a carpenter, then?"

There was a carpenter around on the back street, it seemed, so Aunt Cindy took off her apron and put on her hat—it had pink roses on it, and was the very prettiest hat that Barbara had ever seen; so the little girl thought as she clumped happily along, her hand tight in Aunt Cindy's.

And when they came to the carpenter's house he wasn't at home, and wouldn't be till night; but Aunt Cindy talked with a plump, pretty woman who said she was his sister. Barbara Ann didn't hear much that they were saying, because in the yard there was a little girl just her own size, who stood on one foot and put her finger in her mouth and looked at Barbara Ann. So Barbara Ann stood on one foot and put *her* finger in *her* mouth and looked at the little girl, since it appeared that was what you did when you met strange little girls. This little girl had on the cleanest and starchiest of pink frocks, not so very much faded. Her hair was long and brown and crimped, her eyes were blue, and her nose delightfully snubby and well sprinkled with freckles. What a *beautiful* little girl she was!

"Sure an' I'll come, an' glad to," the plump young woman was saying; "that's to say, if I can fetch Kitty along. I can't be after leavin' her home alone all the day."

Aunt Cindy turned and looked at Kitty, digging



at a dandelion root with the toe of her small shoe. Then she smiled. "Of course you mustn't *think* of leaving her, Mrs. Breen; bring Kitty, by all means!"

And then they were on their way home, and Barbara kept looking back at the little girl, who swung on the gate and kept looking at her. Already they were fast friends, though not a word had they spoken!

Ah, those days of bliss that followed! Nearly every morning came Mrs. Breen and Kitty. Mrs. Breen and Aunt Cindy did things in the house, things that swished and crashed and bumped and rattled, while Kitty and Barbara Ann played happily in the old garden. What wonderful games Kitty knew! First Barbara must be initiated into the mysteries of "counting out" to see who should be "it"; one didn't exactly like to be "it," but, of course, one had to, when it "came out" that way, or else it was "no fair." "Eeny, meeny, miney, mo," that was one way, and "One-ery, two-ery, ickery Ann" was another; but there was a certain *thrill* about

"Wash your mother's dishes,  
Hang 'em on the bushes;  
When the bushes begin to crack,  
Hang 'em on a nigger's back;  
When the nigger begins to run,  
Shoot him with a leather gun!"

Having counted out twice to make sure, they played tag, both regular and squat. They played hide 'n' seek, and hot 'n' cold, and nearly every game that could be played by two little girls.

Kitty brought over her doll, and her bean bag, and her jump-rope and jacks. And they played Hook-emsnivy. What? You never did? Well, this is the way it went: You took a long, strong stick, if possible with a hook or fork at the end, and you poked about in the heap of rubbish that Aunt Cindy and Mrs. Breen tossed from a back window upstairs. Sometimes you found very valuable things indeed, if you happened to be a little girl keeping house in the grape arbor!

First Kitty was Hookemsnivy, and hooked a marvelous box all covered with little shells, while to Barbara's lot fell a really remarkable pin-cushion in the shape of a boot, and so encrusted with tiny glass beads in most elaborate design, that no pin could possibly have found lodgment. And then it was Kitty's turn again, and she fished up a tall jug plastered thickly with putty, into which had been pressed divers bits of assorted hardware—clock wheels, keys, a thimble, a broken corkscrew, collar buttons, pens; some wee china dolls, the sprawly wishbone of a duck, a pair of spectacles without any bows, and other objects not so easily identified; the whole gilded, and further adorned with a purple bow on the handle. Barbara then acquired a gilded rolling pin with a snow scene painted on it, and hooks screwed in below to hang things on. And there was a gorgeous bunch of peacock feathers, and a complicated arrangement of leaves and ferns done in "spatterwork," and—oh, ever so many lovely things.

Many of these "*objets d'art*" were quite modern, and considered "real handsome" in an era which believed in gilding not only the lily but also the coal shovel. But Aunt Cindy, it appeared,

had queer tastes in the matter of household decoration. She liked shining old furniture, and rag rugs, and tall candlesticks, and the sun streaming in through thin white muslin curtains, and pots of scarlet geranium on the window sill. In the eighties!

When Sunday came there already was a great change in the old house; but many Sundays were to come and go before Aunt Cindy considered it really fit for humans to live in. This first Sunday she electrified Barbara Ann by bidding her "run out in the garden if you want to, Lambkins!" No verses, no sitting about trying to control her twitching limbs, and the parlor door was locked! When, late in the afternoon, Aunt Cindy called her to take a letter to the mail-box, her heart sang for joy. No sneaking past the kitchen window this time! She swung—I almost said swaggered—down the brick path to the gate, and marching straight up to the box, boldly asked a lady to drop the letter in for her. The lady smiled at her, too, but Barbara did rather wish it had been Father Christian, instead.

Having read the other letter, we might as well read this one, too, if Uncle Ben doesn't mind. It was addressed to Mr. Benjamin F. Adams, at Ashtabula, Ohio, and this is what it said:

" . . . Mother was right, Ben; something did have to be done. Part of it is done now, but there's plenty more. Ben, dear, Ma and that baby simply can *not* stay here alone with Ann Amelia. She's just plain *loony*! Either Ma will have to come and live with us, or else we will have to come here to stay. I've been wondering about Whitford—does he still



want to take over your interest? Why not make some arrangement with him, and come on here for a time, anyway? You've been tied down to the business for so long, a rest wouldn't hurt you! Well, I don't know as you'd find it so very *restful* here, just at first; I know *I* haven't!—but fixing up things, and the garden and all, would at least be a change. You could make a sort of vacation of the outdoor work, and then if we decide to stay you can look around for an opening here. I do believe it would kill Ma to leave the old place. She's almost seventy now, though I can hardly realize it and she has lived here so many, many years!

“No, I truly don't think she would ever be happy out there. Not that she has been so very happy *here*, these past few years; but she has her memories, all twined about this place, and I feel as if we owed her the small happiness of spending the years that are left, right here among them. I've been to blame, that I haven't seen how things were going. Sister Ann Amelia always was as queer as Dick's hatband—wrapped half way around and then tucked under—and I might have known how it would be.

“Now, Ben, you let me know what you think about it. Oh, Ben, dear . . .

Well, well, never mind about the rest of the letter; it really doesn't concern us in the least, though there's no doubt it made pleasant reading for Uncle Ben!

There followed other letters from Aunt Cindy to Uncle Ben, relative to the hiring of a pair of

dusky buccaneers named Mose and Edwardina, and to matters of packing and shipping and cleaning up. It is quite likely that for a season Uncle Ben was every bit as busy out in Ashtabula, Ohio, as was Aunt Cindy at the old home in Red Haven, New Jersey; and that, let me tell you, was very, very busy indeed!

Mrs. Breen's brother, the carpenter, came and opened the windows that Aunt Cindy couldn't because of their being nailed down; he repaired the sagging shutters, made screens to keep out the flies, and fixed some doors so that they would open and some others so that they would shut. Mrs. Breen scrubbed and scoured and polished, while Aunt Cindy dusted and sorted and arranged and "regulated," till you wouldn't know the place. Aunt Cindy said she didn't blame Aunt Annameel a bit for shouting "Halleluia!" if she felt as good about anything as *she* did every time she heaved an armful of trash out that back window!

Aunt Cindy felt even better over the things that went into the wagon from the Rescue Home down on Water Street, which came nearly every day (by request) and carried away old clothes, furniture, carpets—even the sitting-room carpet with its gorgeous pink roses—all the household impedimenta that had outlasted its usefulness in one home, but which might with proper furbishing be of service in another. Only the absolutely valueless was cast forth, a prey to the Hookemsnivies and finally to the flames.

Each afternoon there was a bonfire in the kitchen garden, superintended by either Aunt Cindy or Mrs. Breen, around which the two—no, *three* children danced and howled like young Apaches.

Yes, three—and a dog. A Newfoundland dog, very big, very black, and *very* shaggy.

The third child was a small boy for whose mother Mrs. Breen washed and worked-by-the-day. On a certain afternoon he had been sent down to Mrs. Breen's with a message that had to do with tea-stains on a tablecloth and, directed by a neighbor, had followed on to the Ferriss place, arriving as the diurnal bonfire was in progress. And when the blaze had burned itself out, he must see the yard and the arbor and the summer-house, and all the treasures snatched from the burning by Kitty and Barbara Ann.

In return he exhibited his loose tooth, which proved to be lots looser than Kitty's; while Barbara Ann looked on, filled with mingled jealousy and dread. Try as she might, each small white tooth in turn, not so much as the tiniest wiggle rewarded her!

Aunt Cindy, quietly observant, decided that the newcomer would "do," despite the kilts and long fair curls which, considered in the light of his, perhaps, seven summers, proclaimed him a martyr to maternal pride. "Oh, I just can't bear to have them cut! And he does look so sweet in dresses!" *You* remember how it was!

But apparently the little boy's mother was about to bow to the inevitable; for at the first opportunity he whispered excitedly to the two little girls, "Say! D'you know what I got, home? It's—PANTS!"

After that he came often. His name was Jimmy Language, Barbara told Aunt Cindy. And the dog's name was Rover. Of course! And Jimmy lived in a big house up on the hill—the new part



of the town—and they were 'Piscopals, and his papa was dead.

Sometimes the three children played in Kitty's yard, where there was a most fascinating "rockery." Kitty's Uncle Tim (Mr. Murphy, the carpenter), planned to have flowers in it next year, but the children thought it much nicer as it was. It made such a splendid fort, or a bake-oven, or a ship, as the exigencies of the situation might demand! But chiefly it was the delightful jungle of the Ferriss premises which formed their playground throughout the long summer days, and there they fluttered about and gabbled like three lively young sparrows, Barbara as chipper as the rest.

Yes, and in the bosom of her family, likewise, Barbara Ann was coming out of her shell. Not clear 'way out, of course, but actually she was beginning, just a wee bit, to brighten up and chatter like other children, forgetting her shyness, and the "don'ts" and repressions of former days.

For one thing, beyond the "If you please" and "Thank you" necessary to gentility, Barbara never had been allowed to open her mouth at meal-times except to put something into it; and her first experiment in this line proved a real sensation.

"I'm going to be a Caffick like Kitty Breen when I grow up," she announced one night at supper.

They all stared. Aunt Annameel grew first white, then red, then purple. "Well, there! Now d'you see? That's what comes of letting her run around with a mess of ignorant Irish brats!" she exploded.

"Sss-sh!" cautioned Aunt Cindy; then to Barbara Ann: "Listen, dear; it would hurt Kitty's

feelings very much, you know, if you should tell her what Aunt Annameel said just now; you won't, will you, Honey?"

Barbara said she wouldn't, and Aunt Cindy asked her why she wanted to be a Catholic.

" 'Cause I like Father Christian *lots* better'n that ole Mr. Stoper. Mr. Stoper always puts his hand on my head and presses down, and it hurts my neck; and he asks me if I am a good girl and do I love my Bible; and I *don't*, and I wouldn't tell *him* if I was naughty. But Father Christian, he comes in Kitty's yard and plays ball with us. And"—after a moment's reflection—"he has got such nice brown speckles on his nose! *Can't* I be a Cafflick when I grow up, Aunt Cindy?"

Aunt Cindy choked a little on a piece of bread, and had to drink a glass of water and wipe her eyes afterward. But she answered, "Why, I suppose so, Chicken, if you still want to—when you're grown up!" At which Aunt Annameel snorted, just as Grandma did when Aunt Annameel "spoke in tongues."

Aunt Annameel did a great deal of snorting these days. It must not be supposed that she observed, unprotesting, the many changes Aunt Cindy brought to pass. The matter of the open shutters she found especially disturbing, but Aunt Cindy merely waved her hand to Mis' Cap'n Sickles through the open window, and laughed.

"All right," grumbled Aunt Annameel, "if you want all the neighbors gawpin' in at you!"

"Let 'em gawp!" was Aunt Cindy's cheerful response. "I don't expect to be doing anything I'll be ashamed of!" Whereupon Aunt Annameel

retired to the parlor to nurse her indignation; only Grandma called it sulking.

The parlor was Aunt Annameel's last stronghold. It occupied an entire wing and could be shut off from the rest of the house, so Aunt Cindy, already having her hands quite full, had decided to "tackle that later," and it was now the only room in the house in which Aunt Annameel felt entirely at home. She foresaw eviction even here, in Aunt Cindy's steady onward march of destruction, with her crazy notions about air and sunlight and dirt and clutter. What did such things matter in these last days, foreseen by the prophets of old? Now were "wars and rumors of war"; the newspapers were filled with accounts of disasters on land and sea, of fire and flood, of robbery and murder; all bearing out the ancient prophecies. 'Most any day now Aunt Annameel expected to be caught up in the air with the rest of the saints, in fulfillment of Divine Revelation. The parlor was as good a place as any in which to wait, and far more peaceful than the rest of the house since Lucinda came.

The delay, however, was disquieting; the more so since it became increasingly apparent that the two sisters never would be able to dwell in harmony beneath the same roof. It also being fairly obvious that Aunt Cindy had no present intention of leaving, Aunt Annameel finally announced that she would do so herself. So with many a sigh and much groaning she packed her belongings, took her small patrimony and the Boston rocker, and in due course her departure; and went to abide at Hepzibah House, where the three women came to be known as "the Hepzibah sisters," or less elegantly, in some circles, as "them Hepzibahs."



They were generally regarded as "cracked," but harmless, and were not molested save now and then, when the spirit moved them to hymns and halleluias at unseemly hours.

Aunt Cindy watched her down the street; then, with a sigh and a shrug, "Well, that ends *that!* Come on, Barbara, let's go shopping!"

And for several years to come, it *was* the end of Aunt Annameel so far as this story is concerned; for only at rare intervals did she return to pay her filial respects to "poor Ma," or to sniff at her sister's "notions," and sigh deeply and ominously over the joyous backslidings of Barbara Ann.

## VI

That September of 1886 was a month of many new happinesses to Barbara Ann. In a way, perhaps, the most delightful of all was the new-clothes happiness; for with the living rooms brought out of chaos into a simple orderliness, Aunt Cindy suspended operations for a time, and began an exhaustive survey of Barbara's wardrobe. After which she again summoned the wagon from the Home!

Were you ever a little girl who always had worn dresses of materials-that-would-wear, in colors-that-wouldn't-show-the-dirt; then all at once there was a dressmaker in the house, and yards and yards of pink checked gingham and blue checked gingham and bright "Scotch plaid," and white dotted swiss, and lace and "hamburg" and "rick-rack," and pink sash ribbon, and blue sash ribbon, and trying on in front of the long mirror in Aunt Cindy's room, and a regular hat from the milliner's, and slippers with two straps across? Because if you never were, you won't understand, and there's no use trying to tell you what it meant to Barbara Ann. It was a simple enough outfit for a little girl of five, going on six, yet the very thought of the lovely things in process of construction made Barbara's heart beat high, and brought a glow to her cheeks and a light to her eyes which made her a very different child from the somber-faced little girl we first saw peeping through the hedge that day in June. Dear me, how very long ago that was, to be sure!

Another delightful happening was the advent of Uncle Ben. Dear Uncle Ben, so big and gentle, so merry, so *understanding*! How different was the old house with him in it! His slow, twinkly smile, his deep voice that never went over your head as other voices did sometimes, but seemed to speak to something 'way down inside you, so that you *had* to pay attention and do exactly as he said; the—oh, the *Uncle-Ben-ness* of him!—seemed somehow to pervade the now cheerful rooms together with the smoke of his old briar pipe. Grandma Ferriss expanded quite genially; Aunt Cindy was radiant, and prettier than ever, Barbara thought. As for Barbara herself, taking things all in all, she was so happy she just had to run out to the summer-house every little while and jump up and down and *hug* herself! Then she would run in and hug Grandma Ferriss and Aunt Cindy, and by and by, when she felt better acquainted, she hugged Uncle Ben. He hugged her, too, *hard*! And called her the funniest names, like Skeezicks, and Toodles, and Little Galliwampus. And teased her, worse than the grocer's boy ever did, but my, didn't she love it!

And yet a third happiness: It was school. You see Jimmy was going, and Kitty; and Barbara begged so hard that Aunt Cindy at last consented, though the child wouldn't really be six till the day after Christmas. That was whole months away, and Barbara knew she couldn't possibly wait so long; so to school she went, that gloriously bright September morning—ah, never could she forget it. Dressed in crisp pink gingham, swinging along hand in hand with Kitty Breen, to the big new brick school on Front Street. Aunt Cindy had done something to her hair, too, so that it was



quite a miracle of fluffiness; and her hair ribbon was pink, like her dress.

Some misgivings she had as to the a-b ab matter, but upheld by the consciousness of her pretty new frock, she marched boldly up to that dragon, only to find that there wasn't any dragon, after all! Old a-b ab and all his tribe had long been banished to the limbo of the out-of-date; yet within a few short weeks, the shortest she ever had known, Barbara discovered that, *mirabile dictu!* She could read! And spell! And write! Real grown-up writing, like letters, not just printing like the "I AM A LYER" on that hateful old placard Aunt Annameel had made her wear *when she was little!* It made Barbara fairly shudder even now—and worst of all—what do you suppose? Aunt Annameel really was one herself, all the time! Hadn't she told Barbara, often and often, ever since she could remember, that if you swallowed the seeds of apples or of grapes, an apple tree or a grape vine would grow right up out of the top of your head? Then one day, quite by accident, one *had* slipped down and though for several weeks Barbara had mystified her family by going about with a worried expression, at intervals surreptitiously feeling the top of her head, still nothing came of it; so she had asked Father Christian over at Kitty's one day, and he had laughed his big, jolly laugh and said, of course, it wasn't true! After that Barbara never felt any awe of Aunt Annameel; whenever they met she would think, "Why, she's only a 'LYER' just like me!"

Nights-after-school, though, were the *most* fun! Sometimes there would be only Barbara and Kitty

and Jimmy playing in the old garden; then again Bessie Paige and Stella Martine would come over—they weren't afraid of witches any more, it seemed, and Barbara, for her part, now perceived that they were not birds of paradise after all, but merely rather homely little girls. Other children came, too, to play in the big yard—Minnies and Lizzies and Katies and Florries and boys in kilts, boys in Fauntleroy suits and boys in just plain "pants," like Jimmy's. And again after supper there often would be many little figures flitting about the grassy dooryard in the warm dusk, playing tag and puss-in-the-corner, or circling to the chant of "Water, water wildflower," or "Go round and round the valley." Sometimes it was the livelier "Farmer in the dell," and "Lazy Alice, will *you* get up?" Or else marching under the clasped hands of the two tallest children, in "London Bridge is falling down, My—*Fair*—LAY-dee!"

And then maybe a screen door would bang somewhere, and "Geor-gee! Oo-hoo! Come, now!" And the circling figures would break and scatter—"G'bye, Bobbyann! 'Night, Tommy! G'night, Nellie! Be out t'morra night? Good-night!"

They were happy days for Barbara Ann. How different from all the days and weeks that had gone before, when she was just a lonely little girl in a dingy dress, longing for "somebody to play with!"

Not only were everydays different, but Sundays as well. Barbara went to Sunday-School now—to the 'Piscopal with Jimmy; for after a brief and meteoric career as a member of the Reverend Mr. Stoooper's infant flock, she had informed Aunt Cindy, very positively, that she didn't want to be

a "Presbyterium" any more. If she couldn't be a Cafflick like Kitty she'd just as leave be a 'Piscopal like Jimmy, she said; but "no more Presbyterium, *please*, Aunt Cindy!"

For two Sundays, and two only, did Barbara Ann wend her way to the plain little white-painted church at the corner of Broad and Locust, there to be instructed in Biblical lore and the stern and rock-bound faith of her forefathers. On the first of these two Sundays she marched boldly forth as to some new and altogether delightful adventure, brave in dotted swiss and blue ribbons, a copper cent clutched tightly in one moist little palm. She hadn't a very definite idea as to the reason for this last. Aunt Cindy had simply put it in her hand at starting, with a perfunctory caution against losing it. Perhaps Aunt Cindy thought, if she thought about it at all, that a knowledge of what to do with pennies in Sunday-School must be inherent in the race. And Barbara hadn't liked to ask, thinking it one of the many things she ought to know and didn't, which she seemed eternally to be encountering nowadays.

She forgot all about it, however, in greeting some of her day schoolmates, gazing about the—to her—lofty building, and listening to the thunderous music of the pipe organ, the first in her experience; so that she felt merely surprise and pleasure when a big boy stopped before her, extending a wooden plate on which were a number of pennies. Barbara took one and said "Thank you" with great politeness. Things certainly were coming her way today!

Quite unprepared for the burst of shrill childish laughter which greeted this dreadful *faux pas*, she did not at first understand that she was its object.



Realization flooded her face with scarlet. In an agony of embarrassment she turned helplessly to the teacher, a pretty young lady with a very red face, who didn't laugh like the rest, but explained with gentle tact, so that the matter was speedily adjusted and the lesson proceeded, though gigglingly, with Barbara struggling to keep back the tears of shame and mortification.

Oh, would it ever be over, so that she could hurry home to Aunt Cindy! Even when at last Sunday-School was "out," it seemed to Barbara Ann that jeers and laughter pursued her to her very gate. She flew into the house like a baby whirlwind, and hurled her quivering little body into Aunt Cindy's kind arms, sobbing out over and over her passionate determination never, never, *never* to go near that old Sunday-School again!

Bit by bit Aunt Cindy got the story, and when she knew, blamed herself vexedly. Sheer tragedy had all but engulfed this dear little, shy little, sensitive little girl, and all because Aunt Cindy hadn't thought!

"I tell you, Ben," she declared that night, when Barbara Ann had been tucked into her little bed, kissed and cuddled and comforted almost into forgetfulness of the afternoon's humiliation, "I ought to be *spanked*! I'm as bad as Annameel, every bit. To think I let that poor baby—I *knew* she hadn't ever been to Sunday-School, nor *anywhere*. Why, *why* didn't I think?"

And Aunt Cindy, wiping her own eyes, resolved upon greater forethought in future; and not only that, but characteristically set about planning sweet vengeance as a balm to Barbara's lacerated pride, and a restorative to her self-respect.

Her plan was duly unfolded as the next Sunday

approached, and again the little girl sallied forth, brave in dotted swiss and pink ribbons, face flushed, head high, a coin clutched tightly in one moist palm. She did not hear the organ today; the loftiness of the high-arched roof did not impress her; she was watching for that boy with the plate of pennies. . . .

Now he stood before her. Ve-ry de-lib-er-ate-ly Barbara Ann opened the moist little fist, took therefrom the imprisoned coin, and slowly raising it well above the extended plate, so that none of its luster should be lost or shadowed, she dropped it ringingly into the midst of its baser brethren.

The giggles ceased abruptly; the score of gimlets resolved themselves into twenty pairs of eyes, blue, brown and otherwise, but all respectful; for the gleaming coin with which Barbara had swelled the infant class contribution for that Sunday to almost undreamed-of proportions, was nothing less than a silver dime!

The lesson continued in awed silence. At its close two little girls offered to walk home with Barbara Ann, but when they emerged from the building there were Uncle Ben and Aunt Cindy, and Grandma Ferriss, too, in an elegant surrey with two horses (from Robinson's livery) waiting to take Barbara for a drive out along the beautiful Shore Road, where the rich "summer people" from New York dwelt in stately cupolaed mansions. The children who lived in these houses had the most *won-derful* clothes—silk dresses, and all kinds of jule-ery, and they could ride every day in carriages like this if they wanted to. But Barbara felt no envy, for her own triumph was complete when she climbed into the front seat beside Uncle Ben and drove away in blissful

grandeur. Not for all the world and the fat Bolton boy's pony, would Barbara have exchanged the memory of that ineffable moment.

It was Barbara's first lesson in the invincibility of wealth, and Aunt Cindy was not wholly at ease as to its wisdom. Snobs and toadies shared her contempt in equal degree. But, thinking it over, she found comfort in the reflection that Barbara was sure to run afoul of it sometime: "Guess the young one might as well learn it right now from these little—uh—calf-worshippers, kotowing to a silver dime!" she decided, and let it go at that.

Nevertheless she thought there was no need of unduly impressing the matter upon the young plasticity of Barbara's mind, and since the child stood stubbornly by her determination to renounce Presbyterianism to the end of time, it might be as well, perhaps, to let her "be a 'Piscopal like Jimmy," if she wanted to, as the avowed alternative to embracing Catholicism with Kitty Breen. So from that time forth the little girl attended St. Barnabas', where she wouldn't be reminded of the time she had been a plutocrat for a day, dazzling *hoi polloi* with her vulgar display of riches!

The very first Sunday Barbara made up her mind that she liked Mr. Seabrooke *nearly* as well as she did Father Christian himself and found that "learning the Golden Text" for her immediately-adored teacher, Miss Agatha Lawrence, was quite another matter from "memorizing a verse of Scripture" for Aunt Annameel. Another early and very interesting discovery was that they had a different God at St. Barnabas', not a bit like Aunt Annameel's God. Miss Lawrence told her all about Him and how He rather 'specially loved little girls who hadn't any earth-



fathers to love them; for this God, you see, was the God of Loving-kindness, while Aunt Anna-meel's God was the God of Wrath.

It wasn't long before Aunt Cindy and Uncle Ben began going to St. Barnabas', too. In the beginning they, like Barbara Ann, had attended the First Presbyterian, where Aunt Cindy had gone to church before she was married and went to Ashtabula to live—they had another minister then, not Mr. Stooper—and which had been the Ferrisses' church ever since Grandpa Ferriss' father's day. Along at first Aunt Cindy had likewise tried to persuade Grandma to go with them "to hear Mr. Stooper," thinking she might find new interests in old associations and that anyway it was bound to do her good to get out and see people as in years gone by. Finally, one Sunday morning, after much coaxing, she did go and came home steeped in indignation, condemning "the hull performance" flatly and unequivocally—the choir, "perked up there in front to show off their best clothes"; the new cornet player; Mr. Stooper's black silk gown and fine linen bands, which were pure folderol and moreover bordered on Popishness; but most of all, the twenty-minute sermon.

As of old, Grandma Ferriss had taken a plentiful supply of "pep'mints" in her pocket, in anticipation of a good old-fashioned discourse on damnation, predestination and such-like vigorous doctrines. She had settled herself for a season of genuine enjoyment. Why, she was *real* glad she came! The Reverend Mr. Stooper, as she supposed, had concluded his introductory remarks and was about to set forth the true meat of his discourse, when to her astonishment he closed the

big Bible and announced a hymn. Grandma certainly did think it queer to stop and sing a hymn right in the middle of the sermon that way, but prob'bly it was another of these new-fangled notions. So she quavered through "How Firm a Foundation," and waited expectantly for Mr. Stooper to proceed.

Even as she waited, the service came to an end, and Mr. Stooper was pronouncing the benediction! Chagrin followed on bewilderment, and then and there Grandma Ferriss forswore church-going for all time. "When I get t' hankerin' for mush an' milk"—thus would she demolish all Aunt Cindy's arguments—"I'll cook it myself, thank ye, and eat it to home!" That was final; the sanctuary saw her no more.

Then Uncle Ben and Aunt Cindy decided that it wasn't necessary and really didn't seem right, for the family to be all split up like that on the question of religious observance. Uncle Ben said that since they all were bound for the same port, what matter whether they traveled by way of predestination, conversion, confirmation, or a tank of water under the pulpit floor? And for precedent, Aunt Cindy recalled that Grandma's people, the Hanchells, up York State, had been Episcopalians, Grandma having "gone over" to the Presbyterians when she married Grandpa Ferriss.

Neither Aunt Cindy nor Uncle Ben so much as hinted that the personal affairs of the Reverend Mr. Stooper might have anything to do with the matter, though in private Uncle Ben had been heard to make grumbling reference to a "weak brother," and Aunt Cindy was emphatic about something or other being "a shame." . . . Heretofore Mr. Stooper's susceptibility to femi-

nine charms had but served to keep up the attendance at prayer meeting and a high pitch of interest in the missionary society and the Ladies' Aid. He was a bachelor, a "catch," and he kept them guessing. But this affair with a married woman! Ah, that was different! And not all his parishioners were as reticent as the Adamses. There were noddings and whisperings that grew into rumors, and rumors that took solid form as facts, till the minister's love affair, probably not criminal in itself nor anything worse than foolish—the last despairing clutch of fatuous middle age at the skirts of fleeting youth and romance—bade fair utterly to disrupt the church.

Many, staunch and upright descendants of a generation that fought and sacrificed for its faith, indignant at the weakness of their pastor and his unworthiness to uphold the sacred traditions of a great denomination, and the ideals of right and truth and courage for which it stood, scattered, temporarily at least, to other churches. The more frivolous stayed to "see it out," till a stirring Session meeting, followed by Mr. Stoooper's resignation, cleared the atmosphere and brought back most of the stragglers.

Inevitably some did not return, Uncle Ben and Aunt Cindy among them. They remained at St. Barnabas' partly on Barbara's account, but partly because they really liked it. Mr. Seabrooke, according to Uncle Ben, preached regular he-sermons, and there were other advantages. In the matter of exercise, for instance: Uncle Ben claimed that "all that getting up and getting down, you know, takes the kinks out of you in great shape!"

Yes, Uncle Ben certainly liked the service at



St. Barnabas', and very proud was he when he was able to follow its intricacies without undue assistance from the Book of Common Prayer. One thing only gave him concern. Invariably, when he should have been devoutly murmuring "—have left undone those things which we ought to have done; and . . . have done those things which we ought not to have done—," he would instead, and with great unction confess to having done those things which he ought to have done, and that he had left undone those things which he ought not to have done; which may have interfered to some extent with the devotions of his immediate neighbors, but otherwise probably did no real harm.

But we digress. . . . Everything was different nowadays with Barbara Ann. Each morning she arose to a world new-made, sure of finding some delightful surprise just around the corner of the day. Once it was a really, truly little live kitten, something Aunt Annameel never would allow her to have, though the child's heart had yearned achingly over every feline waif that wandered into her domain. Aunt Annameel *detested* cats! So when a bit of grey fluff, bright-eyed and mewling hopefully, strayed to the door one day, Barbara rather timidly asked Aunt Cindy if she might keep it. But it seemed Aunt Cindy was different about that, too, as she was about 'most everything. "Why, of course, Lambkins, if it doesn't belong to any one," was her amazing answer.

For days Barbara lived in dread of a probable claimant. It was inconceivable that anything so precious, so infinitely desirable, should be relin-

quished without thorough and desperate search, but when at last it began to seem unlikely that she would have to part with her treasure, after all, she and Kitty set about finding a suitable name for it. Barbara had had no experience in the christening of cats, but Kitty knew a perfectly grand name. It was Ethel. Kitty's mother washed for a lady up on the Hill and the lady's little girl was called Ethel; and Ethel *was* a pretty name, Barbara thought. So Ethel the kitten was named and Ethel he remained ever after, even when he had become a huge and somewhat dissipated old tom-cat, much given to late hours and musical affairs in the back garden.

Barbara had quite dreaded introducing Ethel to Jimmy's dog Rover, for whom the kitten would have made but a moderate-sized mouthful. In agonized suspense she witnessed their first meeting, fully expecting to see her pet disappear at a gulp. Not so Ethel. With arched spine and flattened ears he held his ground against his mighty adversary, every hair on tail and body standing at attention, his tiny pink mouth spitting unexpurgated defiance into the huge black face above him.

"Well, well, well! What a little spitfire it is!" Rover seemed to say with amiable tail-wagging, as he reached out a paw and gently turned the amazing little object over on its back. Ethel scrambled to his feet and bounded away in little sidelong hops; creeping stealthily back as though to pounce on the big fellow and crush him to a pulp, but instead finding himself reversed as before, the instant he came within reach. The game went merrily on until both were tired, whereupon

they lay down together, the kitten curled up against the dog's shaggy coat.

Presently Rover laid his head across an outstretched paw, and Ethel straightway began to wash the big black face with a tongue that was pink and friendly and very conscientious; but finding it rather more than a kitten's-size job, he desisted after a time and gave himself a bath instead. After which they went cozily and companionably to sleep, like the lion and the lamb of prophecy.

Again, among the blessed new joys in Barbara's changed world, was an unforgettable day in New York with Aunt Cindy, a day of shopping and other unaccustomed delights. They went up in the "Sea Bird"; that alone was almost bliss enough for one occasion. The "Sea Bird" was a little old side-wheeler—is, for that matter—unless she has finally gone to pieces like the deacon's famous shay. She made her daily trip to the foot of Franklin Street for the half of "a hundred years to a day," at least, and was like the jack-knife which, provided now and again with new blades and a new handle, was the same old jack-knife still!

No millionaire's sea-going yacht would ever loom so huge, so palatial as did this tubby little freight-and-passenger steamer in Barbara's wondering eyes, on this her first far journeying. It may strain credulity to a shred, but none-the-less it is true that until Aunt Cindy's coming Barbara hadn't ever been *anywhere* in all her life! Her goings-about in company with Aunt Annameel never had taken her farther than Hepzibah's House or Dickerson's grocery, and once to call on Cousin



Mary Lane on the other side of town; even since Aunt Cindy came and there had been school to go to, and Sunday-School, and over-to-Kitty's and sometimes up-to-Jimmy's, still she hadn't ever been really-and-truly, out-of-town, "away." So that the three-hour trip up to the city and the journey back by train was like an excursion to another planet. All that she saw impressed her to a degree unknowable by the movie-fed youngsters of today, sated with train and motor-rides, and turning upward but a languid eye at the roar of an aeroplane overhead.

Even in her own generation Barbara was a little hermit; not one of her contemporaries but had been up to the city lots of times, both by boat and on the cars; and to the beach at Long Branch or Barnegat, and to Grandpa's at Thanksgiving or to Uncle Bill's farm in the summertime. And now at last Barbara herself had become a Traveled Person!

Clinging close to Aunt Cindy, she embarked on a sea of sights and sounds out of which rose certain lofty peaks of memory: A man in a blue coat who walked about ringing a bell and calling out "All ashore that's going!" Barbara was sure he had made a mistake; he must have meant "All ashore that *aren't* going!" Well, glory be! Barbara and Aunt Cindy *were* going, so *they* wouldn't have to go ashore, anyway! . . . The broad decks, where one could walk about and even play a little, though never far from Aunt Cindy, smiling in sympathy. . . . The flapping awnings—what witchery in their shade! . . . The wide branching stairway that heaved so disconcertingly when they went down to the "ladies' cabin," where there were rocking chairs and a

bench around the sides with a long red cushion like the pews in church. Aunt Cindy wanted Barbara to lie down for a little, lest she grow tired before the day had well begun, but Barbara found it quite impossible. There was a large colored lady in a white apron, who talked to every one, and people coming and going, and a little boy crying, and a woman who had lost her purse—no, Barbara couldn't sleep, that was sure; so they went back up the grand stairway—that-wouldn't-be-still, and sat on funny little chairs that could be folded up; and after a while Barbara began to feel rather queer, as if she had eaten too much of something for breakfast, though really she had hardly touched her oatmeal and cocoa, she had been so excited.

They were out of the river now, Aunt Cindy said, and pointed out a strip of sand which she called the Hook. Presently there came two dark men who played on a violin and a harp, and afterward the violin one came and held out his cap to everybody to put money in. Aunt Cindy gave him some, and he smiled with all his nice shiny teeth, and said "thank you" so funnily!

By that time Barbara's breakfast wasn't bothering her so much, and she was able to wave with the rest when they met the "Albertina," which Aunt Cindy said was the "Sea Bird's" sister. . . . After that they saw on an island a great immense lady all made of stone and iron, and some queer-looking things sticking up out of the water, which Barbara understood Aunt Cindy to say were *boys*, but, of course, that must be a mistake, for any one could see that they weren't boys at all! . . . And goodness gracious, what queer boats! The funniest were the ones that *walked*—

not with legs, of course, like people—but with an odd shaped affair on the roof. And there were tugs, and scows, and ever so many more that she couldn't remember, but none so wonderful as this that they were on.

At last came the tying up to the dock, and going off the boat into a huge covered shed, miles long, it seemed, filled with great rumbling trucks and piles of freight, and hoarsely yelling men, and horses clattering over the worn plank flooring. How Aunt Cindy, alert and capable, managed to thread a way through that thundering chaos was a mystery to Barbara Ann, whose heart was all but choking her in her terror.

Then the horse cars, and Barbara could rest her trembling legs, but got a crick in her neck trying to see both sides of the street at once. They went to Ridley's in Grand Street—Barbara hadn't dreamed a store could be so big! And afterward to Macy's, bigger still. Aunt Cindy bought Barbara a winter coat and a beautiful bonnet made of red velvet, with a feather on it; besides a lot of uninteresting things like stockings and under-waists and flannels.

Pretty soon Aunt Cindy asked Barbara if she weren't hungry, and as Barbara was, very, and so was Aunt Cindy, they went to a place Aunt Cindy said was the Derry Kitchen, though it looked more like a dining-room to Barbara Ann. A man in a white apron brought them griddle cakes and maple syrup—how funny to see a man wearing an apron—Barbara meant to ask if he was Mr. Derry, but forgot it in her blissful uncertainty as to whether she preferred ice cream or Charlotte Russe for dessert. Barbara Ann never had tasted either.

After that the events of the day glided off Bar-



bara's consciousness, leaving scarcely a trace. She did note a curious smell on the ferry-boat, like—like—well, she couldn't tell, exactly, what it *was* like; and the train going so fast that she couldn't count the telegraph poles; and Aunt Cindy waking her up when they were 'most home; and falling asleep again over her supper; Uncle Ben or somebody must have carried her up to bed, for there she was in the morning when the sun streamed in across her pillow to wake her, as it always did on bright mornings.

Ah, well, to journey abroad is glorious indeed; but best of all were home, and loving hearts, and her little white bed at the end of the day!

## VII

To Grandma Ferriss and the others, however, "home" was now not altogether the haven of rest that it may have seemed to travel-worn Barbara Ann. Many were the changes, indoors and out; for when Uncle Ben and Aunt Cindy found they must live with Grandma, since she couldn't or wouldn't go to Ashtabula, Ohio, to live with them, they set about "fixing up" the old house to look more as if *folks* lived there, and not so much like an asylum for spooks and spiders, as Uncle Ben said. Grandma Ferris had demurred about the expense, but Uncle Ben promised to share it, since it was to be his home as well as hers; so probably Grandma wouldn't have to go to the poorhouse after all, as she had feared, which was a comfort.

Forthwith had begun such a banging and hammering, with Mr. Murphy there most of the time, such digging and clipping and chopping out in the yard where Uncle Ben was at work, as nearly drove Grandma distracted, but which seemed the acme of joyous excitement to Barbara Ann. Best of all, Aunt Cindy had found time to "tackle the parlor," a proceeding that gave promise of unlimited Hookemsnivying and bonfires galore.

The first step, of course, was to carry out the accumulation of newspapers, and this Aunt Cindy had started to do, with Barbara and Kitty and Jimmy dancing about in gleeful anticipation, when Grandma Ferriss spoke:

"Lucindy," said she, "you better look those

over real good before you burn 'em up. Annameel used to hide things in there, sometimes."

"What kind of things?" demanded Aunt Cindy.

"Well, money, sometimes, and letters; and things she would buy of peddlers and such-like."

Aunt Cindy sat right down on the floor and went to work. Every paper was opened and shaken, each magazine examined for hidden treasure. "Oh, no, Ma—I don't believe there's anything here," she presently reported.

"Well, you just keep right on a-lookin'!" Grandma was very positive about it, so Aunt Cindy, though skeptical, did keep on looking. And at the end of the day this is what she had found: First, a letter from herself to Aunt Anna-meel, dated some three years before, and still containing the five dollars she had sent as a Christmas gift; another letter, from Uncle Ben, also held five dollars "to get something nice for Mother"; while yet a third, from the family lawyer, enclosed a check for thirty dollars and fifty-four cents, evidently interest on some small investment.

Scattered through the papers, in sums from ten cents to ten dollars, were loose bills and silver to the amount of \$46.90, not to mention things of lesser value; sundry family photographs, tracts, recipes, crochet patterns; silver spoons, kettle holders, bolts of ribbon, enough hideous red-and-black calico to make two or three grown-up dresses; several quite new papers of pins, yards upon yards of cotton lace, and a heavy old-fashioned pancake griddle with the handle at the side.

"There!" exclaimed Grandma Ferriss, "I've hunted and *hunted* for that griddle, for more'n a



year! Do look, Lucindy, and see if she hid my other specs in there, too!"

Aunt Cindy had reached the mound in the corner when Grandma called hopefully, "Are they there, Lucindy?"

"No, Ma," was the reply, "but I've found the piano!"

At supper they discussed the disposition of the money, amounting to the princely sum of—well, you can figure it for yourself! Uncle Ben said he s'posed Aunt Cindy would hustle right down to Hepzibah House and give it to Aunt Annameel; but Grandma interposed.

"No, *mom!* You'll do no such a thing, Lucindy Jane! That money was all mine, except the five dollars you sent Annameel—and if she wanted that very bad she should have took better care of it! And what I want you should do is—soon as ever the savings bank is open tomorrow morning, you take that money right down and start an account for Barb'ry Ann—every last cent of it!"

Then Uncle Ben said he'd put in enough more to make it an even hundred; and that is how Barbara Ann acquired a bank account. Just think! All in a few short weeks this once-so-lonely-and-forlorn little girl had amassed a fortune, a family, friends, pretty clothes, and a grey kitten named Ethel! That was long before the fashion of Browning clubs, but Barbara's heart knew the meaning of "God's in His Heaven"—all was right with *her* world!

The transformation of "the old Ferriss place" was not completed over night. The seemingly endless repairs made necessary by years of neglect, the alterations and additions, the tearing down

and building up, filled many months with turmoil, till even Aunt Cindy herself grew well-nigh discouraged. But at last came a time when people passing in the street would say to one another, "Why, is it, *really?*" and turn again to stare, scarce believing they saw aright, or that the pleasant, dignified dwelling set in its well-ordered grounds could be in very truth the shabby structure they long had known.

Wide porches, fresh paint, and the unshuttered windows gave to the house an air of cheerful hospitality quite in contrast with its former dinginess and gloom; the roof no longer shed its shingles with every gust of wind; the chimneys once more were four-square. At evening, mellow lamplight filtered through thin muslin or creamy net, straight-hung in an era of "drapes"; the neighbors in conclave voted it "dreadful plain-looking!—and yet there's something about it—"

Yes, there *was* "something about it"; and that something was Aunt Cindy. And out in the yard there also was something, which was Uncle Ben. The changes here matched the changes indoors, and supplemented the altered appearance of the house itself. The hedge, Barbara's prison wall of old, had been plucked forth root and branch, brands for the winter's burning; more than one too-shady tree had felt the ax and the superabundant shrubbery was reduced to a clump of rhododendrons in one corner, a big syringa bush at the end of the porch, and some lilacs farther back. The tottering old fence that had divided the dooryard from the middle garden now reposed in the cellar, neatly split and piled for kindling, so that the arbor led directly from the "back dooryard,"

flanked by the splendor of Aunt Cindy's flower beds.

Aunt Cindy, it seemed, had but to put a few seeds in the ground and pour over them a libation of cool water, when forthwith up rose a blaze of flowering annuals and perennials to bloom with all their might, in season and out. Never were such sweet-peas as hers, nor "bleeding-hearts," nor Canterbury bells; her very hollyhocks didn't lop over like other hollyhocks, but bore their cups of rose and white and crimson with haughty erectness.

And what great masses of phlox, what beds of poppies and of scarlet sage, what flaming spikes of gladioli in long rows, and iris, blue and golden! Velvet pansies cuddled close to the warm earth, cheek by jowl with fragrant heliotrope and mignonette, and fiery nasturtiums hiding under their green umbrellas. There were roses, too, and great dashing peonies, and tiger lilies—most gorgeous of all. A breath from Aunt Cindy's garden would cause the famed perfumes of Araby to grow faint with envy; its glowing loveliness, glimpsed across Uncle Ben's sun-dappled, velvet-smooth lawn, was a vision to delight the eye of the passerby and refreshment for a jaded soul.

The kitchen garden once more functioned as such, and here Barbara Ann had her own little plot, which she cultivated so assiduously that the infant vegetables had slight chance of reaching maturity. She did, however, succeed the second season in raising some early June peas, quite enough for a "mess"; and they were the very best peas that Uncle Ben ever ate—he said so himself!

The summer house was left untouched, beyond clearing the doorway and reinforcing the frame-



work, which had begun to protest at its weight of greenery; and all through her girlhood this remained Barbara's favorite retreat, a chamber of rejoicing on golden days, a shelter in times of stress and storm.

But it was inside the house, after all, that the old order had changed most completely. There was a furnace now, and a bath. Installing the former necessitated some changes in the chimneys, in course of which the workmen had found a bricked-up fireplace in the parlor, and another on the settin'-room side. Instead of having the masking bricks replaced, Aunt Cindy plunged into sheer iconoclasm. A parlor, in Aunt Cindy's experience, was a place to be aired and dusted about once in so often, but which was never found otherwise than airless and dusty when occasion arose for its use. Luckily these occasions were not many; a funeral, a wedding, a call from the minister or his wife, or some social affair of great formality. It did seem a pity to keep the pleasantest room in the house closed and idle, set apart for such inconsiderable use. It would probably be quite a few years before it would be needed for Barbara's wedding, Aunt Cindy reflected and she hoped it would be longer still before it was required for a funeral. Social affairs there should be in plenty, but not formal ones; and as for Mr. and Mrs. Seabrooke, they were quite apt to come 'cross-lots from the rectory, he in muddy boots, to ask Uncle Ben's opinion of some new fishing tackle, and she to beg Grandma's recipe for molasses cookies; for that the back door was much handier.

So really there didn't seem to be so very much need for a parlor, and as such Aunt Cindy ban-

ished it for all time—an act almost amounting to sedition—in the eighties!

Nearly thirty feet long, and with windows on three sides, the room in which Barbara had been wont to gaze in awe upon the lady of the tombstone, the wax fruit, and the hair wreath, became the very heart of the home; the family living-room. The aforementioned works of art, also the black-and-red calico, Aunt Cindy sent down to Hepzibah House to Aunt Annameel; for she herself would never be able to sleep with them in the house, she said, not even in the farthest, darkest corner of the attic!

And here in the parlor-that-was, Uncle Ben built rows of book-shelves, shoulder high. The old "secretary" stood close by one window, and the "square" piano made itself an unobtrusive as might be, near another. Barbara thought it strange to have it turn its back to the room that way; Cousin Mary Lane's, and Jimmy's mother's, and Mis' Cap'n Sickles', which were all the pianos of her acquaintance, were each backed firmly up against the wall, but Aunt Cindy, who wasn't especially musical, said she disliked to have even a piano show its teeth at her; besides, you got a better light from the window this way, in case you wanted to play on it—which really is what a piano is for, of course.

Easy chairs were drawn before the fireplace, a broad couch with bright cushions near-by. There was a footstool for Grandma Ferriss, a rug for Ethel; the hearth-rug, really—but Ethel considered it his own, and resented the intrusion of alien feet. Under the soft-shaded lamp on Great-grandma Ferriss' gate-leg table, Aunt Cindy's work basket and Barbara's school books hob-

nobbed with the evening paper, "The Century" and "Harper's Bazaar."

The old sitting-room was made a dining-room, with a grate fitted in to the fireplace to burn coal; by the same progression, the former dining-room became the kitchen, a big sunny room in which you actually could swing a cat, if you wanted to. The old kitchen was a tucked-up little place, a lean-to reached by a step down from the rest of the house, and Aunt Cindy watched gloatingly while Uncle Ben and Mr. Murphy demolished it, building in its place a wide latticed porch, whither she might take the potatoes to pare or peas to shell on warm summer days, or hang clothes to dry in bad weather.

For that "step down," of course, was a step *up* as well, when you went the other way. Aunt Cindy didn't blame the builder so much, she said, he was probably a man and therefore didn't know any better; but to think that three generations of Ferriss women, supposedly intelligent, had meekly clambered up and down an eight-inch step forty times a day for nobody knew how many years—it made her ashamed of the breed. First Madam Ferriss, for whom the house was built; then her daughter-in-law, now Grandma Ferriss; and finally Aunt Annameel and even Aunt Cindy herself, and nobody ever *doing* anything about it! Aunt Cindy hadn't minded it so much when she was younger; it had always *been* there, you see, and one can get used to almost anything in time. But after fifteen years' absence she found she must get used to it all over again, and like the immortal Tupman, "I am too old, sir!" she said to Uncle Ben, "and if that is not enough, I am too fat!"



Not that Aunt Cindy really *was* old or fat, of course; she wasn't old a bit, nor either too fat or too thin, but just right, and wholly delightful in every respect.

"The chambers," as Grandma Ferriss called the rooms above, were likewise made spic and span with fresh paint, airy curtains and pretty chintz. And Barbara Ann had her own little room all in pink and white, the very pride of her heart, and Aunt Cindy had taught her to care for it herself. Barbara was learning to cook, too. Long before she was eight, she could make toast, all crisp and golden brown; boil the eggs for breakfast exactly as Uncle Ben liked them, and bake apples and potatoes to fluffy perfection. She could make apple-sauce, too, and a few simple puddings—rice 'n' raisins with hard sauce, you know, and bread pudding with m'rang. Barbara's m'rang was almost as good as Grandma's, though it *was* so hard to beat the egg-whites stiff enough, and sometimes Aunt Cindy had to help her about that. And Aunt Cindy had promised to teach her how to make gingerbread next!

But you mustn't think it was all work and no play for Barbara Ann. No, indeed it wasn't. The arbor and the summer-house, the grassy yard and the big roomy porch, were the scene of many a childish revel, Kitty Breen her closest friend still, and Jimmy, whose surname Barbara now knew to be Landridge instead of Language, her devoted squire. And when winter came there was Aunt Cindy's bright kitchen made brighter still by the happy faces of little children—ah, the joy of winter nights-after-school, and steaming cocoa, and bread 'n' butter with sugar on! Saturday after-

noons there would be candy-pulls, and popping corn, or if there happened to be snow, "jack-wax" made from the maple syrup that Great-uncle Hanchell sent Grandma every spring from his farm "up York State!"

Seldom was there much snow in that region—at least not until the famous blizzard of '88. *That* was something to wonder at, to brag about, to remember in after years. For half a century to come, every big snowstorm would be compared with this, and those of us who romped and frolicked through those mountainous drifts would scorn the puny affairs they call "blizzards" nowadays. Three days Barbara stayed indoors, watching and listening to the raging, whirling, screaming white tempest without. There was no milk, and the card in the window which summoned the baker's wagon went quite unheeded; but Aunt Cindy rose superbly to the occasion, and evolved most delectable dishes out of what foodstuffs happened to be in the house. Luckily there was plenty of fuel, and how jolly and cozy it was to sit cross-legged on the rug before a blazing fire in the living-room, with Ethel curled up all soft and cuddly in one's lap, while big red apples sizzled on the hearth, and Uncle Ben told stories of other days and other storms! Uncle Ben was a wonderful story-teller, and even Grandma Ferriss was moved to reminiscences of that other blizzard in '59, or was it '57?

And when the storm was over and the sun came out, and people began to dig themselves out of their own front yards, that was when the real sport began for Barbara and her cohorts. As soon as ever Jimmy could get down from the hill

he and Barbara held high carnival with shovel and broom; Kitty, poor child, having hit upon this, of all others, as a propitious time to *have the measles*, and though she wasn't very sick, she couldn't even watch the fun from the windows, "on account of her eyes," you know.

Having first built themselves a commodious igloo in the kitchen garden almost exactly like the ones in the "Jography," they next constructed a flight of snow steps to the top of the back fence, where they stood as on the heights of Darien, surveying both the Atlantic of the Ferriss yard and the Pacific of the Smiths', which abutted on the rear. The Smith children—the little Smith girl's name was Thankful Cordelia Jennie May Smith, and her brother was called Willie—had an ambitious project under way, being nothing less than a three-story house with bay windows and a mansard roof. But having discovered the small explorers on the fence-top, they abandoned it for the time being, and built themselves a stairway to meet that of Jimmy and Barbara. Soon both premises came to display much statuary of men and beasts, besides a system of trenches and dug-outs that would have put a Von Hindenburg to shame, and where many a hard battle was fought, mostly with hand grenades.

But snow will melt in mid-March sunshine, however deep it may lie; so at last it was all gone, and there was that delicious earth smell. Before you knew it robins were everywhere, lawns were all tender green, and the locust trees were budding. Then spring became summer without anybody seeing how or when it was done; the trees were in full leaf, Aunt Cindy's garden began to



don its Joseph's coat, and the long vacation really and truly did begin at last, though it had seemed as if it never, never would.

Jimmy and his gang affected great superciliousness toward girls these days; even Barbara he bespoke somewhat churlishly when there was a crowd around, to which she responded in kind; but in the main their friendship endured even though the fellows called him "Laura" because of it. This, however, they were careful to do only in his absence, since the day he licked Eddie Cowles and compelled him, with his mouth full of mud, to say "Jim" three separate and more or less distinct times.

This new "Jim" rather fancied himself as an all-around badman, and took no pains to conceal his true and desperate character, especially from the little girls. To Barbara one day he remarked casually, his off-hand manner but thinly veiling a most unholy pride in his lawlessness—"Say, Bobs, y' know what I'm gonna do? I'm gonna learn to swear like Ban Hendrickson! I know *some* words a'ready; want to hear me say 'em?"

Barbara's horror was quite genuine, though perhaps if it hadn't been for ole Peter K-napskittle—well, I can't say. You see, there was a tradition in the third grade at school, that if you said bad words ole Peter K-napskittle came for you at night and carried you off to his tumble-down shanty by the river. Old Peter was a scissors grinder by trade, and kept ringing a bell as he crouched along, bent almost double by the weight of the grindstone on his back. It was whispered that if he caught you saying bad words, he would grind your tongue upon that self-same wheel, just as he did your mother's knives and

shears. Of course when you got to be sixth grade or thereabouts you knew that his name really was Rafferty, that the many, many children swarming about his shanty were all young Raffertys; and that he was a kindly old fellow who liked to smoke his pipe and read the paper in his stocking feet when his day's work was done.

But Jimmy—"Huh! Think I'm scairt of that ole Peter K-napskittle? Like to see him try to catch me! Listen here: 'Ogosh, Ogosh, Gotell, Billybedam—' "

What depths of blasphemy Jimmy might have reached will never be known, for in the distance, unmistakably clear and coming nearer, was the sound of old Peter's big brass bell. "Run, Jimmy, run!" screamed Barbara; and Jimmy—ran.

That summer all the "fellers"—and that included such girls as were not utterly outside the pale—had nicknames original and appropriate. Not to have an extra moniker for the exclusive use of your most "nintimate" friends was to be hopelessly out of date, as unthinkable, almost, as marbles in November; you may be sure no clan in all Red Haven outdid Jimmy and his henchmen. Kitty Breen was Kitty no more, except to outlanders like her mother and her Uncle Tim, and the kids around on Maple Avenue; to the inner circle of her friends she was Hully Jacups, which seemed to have a sort of chubby sound, and so to fit her admirably. Barbara now was "Wizzy-bone,"—a vague suggestion of legs long and slender, not to say skinny; and Thankful Cordelia Jennie May Smith shook off these cumbersome entitlements for the more elegant "Countess of Cork"—Cork being a place highly thought of by Kitty's Uncle

Tim, and a countess, as everybody knows, being a very fine lady indeed, almost like a queen, besides sounding better with Cork; so Thankful, etc., ought to have been satisfied, and was, except for a disquieting impression about old bottles.

The brother of this noble lady, yclept Willie aforetime, now accorded the sissy diminutive naught but contempt, answering only to the name of "Bull"; not because of his physique, which was rather more on the order of a shad's, but because of that famous one called "Sitting," the hero of the ages to Willie Smith!

It is painful to relate that Jimmy, the boss of the gang, must go down to posterity as "Waffles." Once upon a time, at a church supper, he had consumed fourteen of these toothsome delicacies, acquiring at once a nickname and a reputation. He didn't mind the reputation, but would have liked something a trifle more heroic in the way of a nickname. "Devil Dave" would have answered admirably, or Hawkeye, or Chingachgook, which he pronounced Chinkachook; but it didn't matter about that, because the fellows just wouldn't call him anything but "Waffles," anyway.

This was the aggregation that loafed, Micawber-like, in the arbor one hot August afternoon. It being decided that their lack of initiative was due to a corresponding lack of nourishment, Wizzybone was delegated to explore Aunt Cindy's cooky jar. With her return the general ennui at once took flight, for not only did she bring cookies—two for each—but in the pocket of her apron reposed a perfectly good goldfish—dead, quite dead. "And we can have a really fun'ral!" she cried, excitedly.

The children crowded around to look and listen.



It seems the goldfish had died of sunstroke. Aunt Cindy had found him floating in the globe, which stood near a window in a blaze of westering sun, just as Barbara arrived on her quest for cookies; and having no further use for the finny corpse, she told Barbara to take it out in the garden and bury it.

Immediately the listless crew was galvanized into action. The "really fun'ral" was soon under way and a most impressive one it was, with Bull Smith's wheelbarrow for the hearse and a match-box for a coffin. The coffin was rather a tight squeeze, inasmuch as Mr. Waffles, the undertaker, had to bend the tail of the deceased in order to make him fit; but the hearse was very roomy indeed.

Some slight difficulty arose over the burial service, and discussion waxed loud and shrill; was it wicked, or wasn't it, to say prayers about a fish? Finally the ayes had it and there were no prayers; but Bull was permitted to preach a sermon, and did so most eloquently:

"Dearly b'loved brethren, isn't it a sin  
To eat baked potatoes and throw away the skin?  
For the skins would feed the pigs, and the pigs  
would feed you;  
Dearly b'loved brethren, isn't that true?"

They selected a cool spot in the shade of the summer-house for the grave, and erected a tombstone made of a shingle, inscribed by their united efforts:

"Here lies Mr. Fish, who died of the heat;  
We bury him deeply, so Ethel can't eat."

Then the girls made wreaths of flowers, and pillows, and a heart, though Hully Jacups did think that was too much like valentines. By then it was suppertime, and the mourners departed, "a pleasant time having been had by all," as the Red Haven Weekly Courier might have put it.

Very early next morning, however, all were on hand once more—Hully Jacups, and Waffles, and the Smiths, both the Countess and the Bull—to gaze upon the new-made grave; drawn, perhaps, by the same sinister influence which is said to be the undoing of many an actual malefactor. It followed as night follows sunset that the little ghouls must disinter the interesting remains, to see how "they" had withstood the ordeal.

Whoo-woop! Hey! Jim-minny Crismus! "Remains," forsooth! "The late" Mr. Fish was, in fact, so very much alive that when the matchbox coffin was opened, out he flopped on the grass, and thrashed about right energetically, considering what he had been through!

Then did Undertaker Waffles prove himself a man of initiative and action, in spite of his unheroic nickname. Seizing the gasping ex-corpse, he led the shrieking mourners in a mad dash for the aquarium. The race with death was won by a nose—the fish's—which entered the water, followed instantly by its body, just in time to ward off a second funeral, a permanent one this time!

Alas, it was no miracle; the explanation was simple. The fish hadn't really been dead when Aunt Cindy took it from the water, and the cool earth, the depth of the grave, and a shower in the night, all contributed to its recovery. But ever after, until it finally died of old age or indigestion or whatever it was, that fish *swam backward* be-

cause of an injury to its tail, caused by being crowded into an undersized coffin on the occasion of its premature burial!

Thus with games and laughter the weeks sped by, and summer waned, and came autumn—the autumn of a Presidential election. We were fiercely partisan in those days. Friendships cracked and broke under the strain. If you were a Republican you joined hands with other Republicans, and while you stepped backward and forward facing a line of little Democrats in similar formation, you chanted to a jingling tune a verse that ran something like this:

“The train is coming around the bend,  
Good-bye, ole Grover, good-bye!  
It's loaded down with Harrison men,  
Good-bye, ole Grover, good-bye!”

Or if you chanced to be an adherent of the Honorable Mr. Cleveland you would make flippant inquiry as to your opponents headgear, thus:

“Where dijja get that hat?  
Where dijja get that tile?  
Isn't it a nobby one?  
It's just the proper style!  
I should like to have one  
Just the same as that;  
Where e'er I'd go they'd shout 'Hello!  
Where dijja get that hat?' ”

There also were certain comparisons between the Republican party and the tails of puppy-dogs



and sundry remarks concerning "rats and cats" and "Demmycrats" which were very opprobrious and insulting. Finally, vituperation failing, you always could make snoots at each other. Kitty made beautiful snoots, her little tip-tilted nose lending itself admirably to this form of warfare.

Kitty being a Democrat and Jimmy a Republican, Barbara Ann was torn by loyalty to both, until she found that Uncle Ben was a Republican, which of course left her no choice in the matter.

And, ah! The torchlight processions, becoming ever bigger and more brilliant as the great day approached, each party striving to outdo the other! They were the real thing, those parades. None of your tame modern affairs with a mud-gutter band and one transparency. These were led by real bands in gay uniforms, and the paraders swung along to the warlike strains of "Marching Through Georgia," "John Brown's Body," and "The Red, White, and Blue." Never would Barbara hear these stirring old tunes without seeing again the long lines of citizens in silk hats and fluttering badges; even as the strains of "Tipperary" and "Over There" will bring to the minds of a later generation a vision of lean, shaven youth in khaki, marching with smiling lips and squared jaws, on to the Great Adventure.

In those less heroic processions of '88, every other man carried a flaming torch, and every so many rows there was red fire, or green, lighting the scene with a lurid glow. Transparencies bobbed high above the glossy hats; here and there were great silken banners and always at the very beginning a huge flag rippled its stars and stripes to the autumn breeze, a signal for lusty cheers re-echoing along the line of march. Thrilled to the

marrow, Barbara and her friends cheered and shouted with the rest; a parade was a parade, regardless of party affiliations.

But at last came the Tuesday after the first Monday in November, and Mr. Harrison was President Harrison, and Mr. Cleveland went fishing. You made friends with your erstwhile political enemies—"got glad again" was the way you phrased it; and there was nothing to look forward to but the interminable stretch of days till Thanksgiving, followed after another interminable stretch of days, by Christmas and its week of holiday fun.

## VIII

“Hey, Bobs, c'mon go crabbing!”

Jimmy, barefoot, basket in hand, “scalp net” over his shoulder, bounded up to the kitchen door as Barbara Ann wrung out the last dish towel and hung it on the rack. “Can’t she, Aunt Cindy? The tide’ll be just right now.”

“We-ell—want to, Barbara? You can help me this afternoon instead, if you’d rather.”

Barbara flew for net and lines, pausing only to hug Aunt Cindy delightedly.

“So long, then, Aunt Cindy! O-ho! Crabs for supper tonight! Mmm-m!” Jimmy hinted openly and with perfect confidence. Always, when he and Barbara went crabbing, their catch came undivided into Aunt Cindy’s kitchen, and Jimmy stayed to supper. Jimmy’s mother would have no dealings with crabs, dead or alive; horrid messy things they were, and their claws—ugh!

“See that you bring plenty, then!” laughed Aunt Cindy as the two disappeared river-ward, Jimmy’s eager voice floating back—“I’ve found a new place, Bobs, a dandy! Gee, but they’re thick! . . . ” Aunt Cindy smiled, and then sighed, the smile still curving her lips. Such a little little while for them to be children together and afterward—who can tell?

But no “afterward” troubled Jimmy’s thoughts, nor Barbara’s, as they sought the new crabbing ground above the boat-house. They set their lines, a chunk of meat and a sinker on each,



and watched for the sudden tautening which meant that one of the scuttling tribe below had started home with the bacon. Then the cautious pulling in: "Gosh, this one's a whale! Don't let him get away—easy, now!" And when the queer brute, still clinging hopefully to its dinner, was just beneath the surface, a sudden scoop with the net, and there you were! Of course, an occasional victim, more temperamental than the rest, would take fright and resign the bait; sometimes both bait and crab would be missing; but for all that, Jimmy's observations as to the rightness of the tide and the dandiness of the new place were so nearly correct that the big splint market basket was full long before dinner-time.

Proudly the two carried home their catch to be exclaimed over by Aunt Cindy, who if she loathed the horrid, messy things or feared their pinches, gave no sign, but went gaily about preparing for the feast. "Supper at six, Jim!" she called after him as he started home.

Jimmy grinned. "Don't you worry—I'll be right there in that chair when the whistle blows! Gonna have 'em devilled, Aunt Cindy?"

He liked that—Aunt Cindy calling him Jim, that way, just as if he were twenty, instead of twelve. It made his chest feel all kinda swelled up, and little shivers to run up and down his back. Aunt Cindy always knew, somehow, the way to talk to a feller. His mother, now, always called him James; he adored his mother, of course, but he would cheerfully have died for Aunt Cindy.

"Crabbing" was an ever-popular river sport in the set to which Jimmy and Barbara belonged. Sometimes they went *en masse* and made a day

of it, the big covered baskets going to the river laden with lunch, which, having been consumed to the uttermost fragment, would give place to a return cargo of rattling, rasping crustaceans. On these occasions Aunt Cindy went along, with usually another grown-up or two to share the responsibility. They would seek a certain shady spot near the "sand bar," and the elders and perhaps some of the little girls would begin arrangements for lunch, while the rest, barefoot, scattered to set the lines. As soon as the baskets were filled, the boys would retire to a deep cove around the point, bathing suits being conspicuous by their absence among the male youth of that age; indeed, had one of their number appeared among his fellows clad in such an effeminate garment, he certainly would have been mobbed and the badge of his sissynood torn from him pronto.

So to their sheltered swimmin' hole they hied, their splashings attended by shouts and wild hilarity; the girls meanwhile disrobing in a leafy bower near the picnic ground, and very quaint indeed were the costumes which presently disported themselves in the shallower water of the sand bar. Barbara's had been evolved from an old blue flannel shirt of Uncle Ben's, by the simple expedient of cutting off the sleeves and fastening the tails together at the bottom, leaving an aperture for each slender leg. Kitty's costume consisted of one of her own little red flannel petticoats buttoned to an underwaist; while Ethel Harbie, the aristocrat of the crowd (she lived next door to Jimmy, in one of those pretentious modern dwellings with a Queen Anne front and a Mary Ann rear)—Ethel had a *regular* bathing suit, bloomers

and all, made from an old purple silk dress of her mother's.

That is, it *was* purple when she donned it for the first time, proudly displaying its perfections to her envious mates in their makeshift garb; but when she emerged from the water a half-hour later—alack! Gone was its regal hue, perished its splendor! It was of the earth, earthy; in color not unlike the mud churned up by the paddle-wheels of the "Sea Bird" at low tide—a dirty reddish brown. For the remainder of the season Ethel's bathing suit led a chameleon-like existence, taking on new and dingier tints with each successive dip in the salt water, a mortification to its wearer and a warning to the vainglorious.

The bathing hour lasted until lunchtime, leaving the narrowest possible margin for dressing operations, which luckily were not elaborate. Then with wet hair and shining faces they sat about under the trees and ate sandwiches and yet more sandwiches; sometimes they had frankfurters skewered in close formation along a sharpened stick, like fringe, and roasted over a camp-fire. They tasted slightly smoky, to be sure, and were apt to be charred at the lower end; but what broiled quail, what canvasback, what chicken a la King of later years could equal them for deliciousness!

And after that there would be cake and yet more cake, and lemonade or homemade root beer, which Barbara didn't like because it tasted like mucilage. And the boys would tease the girls to hear them squeal, and climbed trees and ran races and turned summersaults and handsprings solely for their own amusement, turning never an eye nor more than one ear to the feminine admiration



all about them; till suddenly someone would discover a crab basket overthrown, its quondam prisoners scuttling off sidewise in all directions. By the time they were corralled and secured, some grown-up would look at a watch—and the sport would be over till another day.

The walk home was ever a prancing procession, from which small detachments dropped off at this gate and that corner, till only Jimmy was left with Barbara and Aunt Cindy. Then the crabs must be prepared for supper. You simply dropped them into boiling water, you know, until the dun shells turned a vivid scarlet. Barbara didn't like to see that, so Jim used to jab his knife into a certain place at the edge of the shell, and after that the crabs didn't seem to mind being boiled.

Fishing, too, was good in this tide-water river, and Barbara learned to manage Jim's old flat-bottomed rowboat as well as any of the boys. Aunt Cindy had some misgivings, and would have vetoed fishing from the boat if it hadn't been for Uncle Ben.

"Better let her learn to row," he advised; "it's good exercise, and a ducking won't hurt her."

"But Barbara can't swim!" Aunt Cindy objected.

"That's easily remedied!" laughed Uncle Ben. "Besides, Jimmy can."

"Jimmy! That boy!"

"There now, Cindy, don't you worry. Barbara isn't ever going to drown with 'that boy' around. He can swim like an eel; water is the same as air to him; and the river isn't deep, anyway."

"I know; but in case of an accident—even grown men sometimes lose their heads—"

“Jimmy won’t. Why, Cindy, can’t you see? The boy doesn’t know it, but he’d go through fire for Barbara. Now don’t worry—”

So Aunt Cindy didn’t, very much; but Barbara did get her ducking. Then, “I told you so!” from Aunt Cindy, and simultaneously, “I told you so!” from Uncle Ben.

It was all the fault of that big old grandfather eel that lived under the flat rock above the Boltons’ private landing. All summer the children had fed him toothsome morsels in the way of bait, which he would remove from their hooks with uncanny skill; till he grew fat and lazy and careless, and Barbara hooked him at last. But to land him—ah, that was another matter! In the excitement the boat was capsized and the children thrown into the water—not very deep, to be sure, but the tide being in, it was well over their young heads. Jim made an instant grab at Barbara, only to feel her sleeve slip from his grasp. Never in his life had he been so frightened. All the graceful, daring feats of which as a swimmer he was so proud, were as though he never had heard of, much less practised them. He forgot how to dive. But somehow, clumsily, splashily, he reached Barbara and brought her to the surface, choking and sputtering, almost as soon as the water had closed above her head. Then he towed her ashore, and they streaked for home and Aunt Cindy as fast as their legs could fly, showering all and sundry as they ran with salt drops from their drenched clothing.

It didn’t occur to Jimmy to leave Barbara at the gate. He marched with her into Aunt Cindy’s presence, explaining not too coherently—Barbara’s teeth chattered so she couldn’t help much—

and leaning rather heavily on the eel in the matter of blame. Aunt Cindy hadn't time to listen, anyway, and while Barbara was being hustled into dry garments, Jimmy went to meet Uncle Ben, just turning in at the gate. Again the boy recounted the incident, without undue emphasis on his own part as rescuer, and waited manfully enough for whatever might be in store for him in the way of censure or reproof.

"Say, Jim," came unexpectedly from Uncle Ben, "why don't you teach Barbara to swim?"

"Wh-why, I'd be g-glad to!" Jimmy stuttered in his relief, "—if you'd like me to—and Aunt Cindy!"

Uncle Ben, it appeared, *would* like it, and so would Aunt Cindy, after she and Uncle Ben had talked it over. So it was arranged that the lessons were to begin at the bathing beach down by the steamboat landing, as soon as a conventional bathing suit could be made for Barbara Ann; which reminded Jimmy that his own customary swimming garb would hardly do, either!

In winter there was skating, and fishing through the ice, and shouting one's-self hoarse at the ice-boat races—thrilling contests in which great winged sleds flew over the ice with the speed of the wind. How Jimmy longed to pilot one! Though with the coming of spring his thoughts were all of the "cat" he hoped to own some day, gleaming white as to paint and mainsail, its interior a marvel of polished wood and shining brass.

Thus the two swam and romped and skated into their teens, in the sexless companionship of that less precocious day, and always it was Barbara



with Jimmy, and always Jimmy with Barbara. When other boys and girls paired off in this manner, unmerciful "joshing" was the best they could expect at the hands of ribald youth; but all their world took Barbara and Jimmy quite as a matter of course. They were chums at fourteen, as they had been at seven; and for all any one knew or cared, would be the same good pals at forty, provided both lived to such advanced age, bordering on senility and decay!

Came a time when Jimmy had to leave the choir at St. Barnabas', following one awful Sunday when his voice cracked hideously and unexpectedly on a too-high note in the "Gloria in Excelsis." Mrs. Landridge was dreadfully mortified, and blamed Mr. Nichols—"Old Nick," in the affectionate disrespect of his boys—for not having taken James out sooner. Jimmy himself was totally unmoved. He wasn't a bit sorry to be out of the choir, for the time formerly wasted in rehearsals was thus made available for work on his new cat-boat, now an accomplished fact.

By dint of rigorous parsimony in the matter of his allowance, supplemented by the proceeds of a season as errand boy for Mr. Krauss, the butcher, nights-after-school and Saturdays, Jimmy had contrived to buy Bancroft Hendrickson's boat. Ban was going away to college in the fall, and was tired of a sailboat anyway. He wanted one of those new power launches such as he had seen at Barnagat the previous summer; they would go four or five knots an hour, and all you had to do was to start the engine and steer!

So Jimmy and his "side kick," Amory Booth, spent long hours scraping, calking, painting,

polishing and otherwise furbishing the erstwhile "Whitecap," rechristened "Lucinda Jane"—Barbara broke a ketchup bottle of Aunt Cindy's dandelion wine over the newly painted name, the day they "got her over." Lucinda Jane was a boat to be proud of—glistening white to the water line, sea green below; though as to sail, she was hardly the white-winged fairy boat of Jimmy's dreams. Ban Hendrickson had sailed her in fair weather and foul, for a matter of four or five seasons, but with the sun upon her—ah, she was a beauty, and Captain Jim the happiest old salt on the Shrewsbury. His speech took on a distinctly nautical flavor. Noon was eight bells, now; wind and storm became a blow, a squall, or a nor'easter; starboard and port, boom and gaff, forestay and bowsprit, cockpit and helm, rolled glibly from his tongue; he even had been heard to demand, on occasion, the shivering of his timbers!

But for all these outward and visible signs of expert seamanship as applied to navigating a cat-boat, Barbara wasn't allowed to sail with Jimmy the first season. Aunt Cindy was adamant; indeed, not until two whole summers had passed, and Barbara's growing skill as a swimmer had made her practically amphibious, would she consent, and then only on condition that they promise never to venture out into the bay, but to confine their voyagings exclusively to the comparative safety of the river. Nor could Jimmy coax Aunt Cindy herself to set foot aboard her precious namesake. She did not doubt that drowning was an easy death; her only fear, she said, was that it might prove *too* easy!

## IX

Barbara, meanwhile, was growing from a leggy youngster into a tall, slender girl, very sweet and winsome, though aside from a shapely nose which she secretly admired, she had little actual beauty of feature. Her mouth was too wide, with no slightest hint of a cupid's bow, and by all the canons of romance one's mouth must be a cupid's bow even though one couldn't have large violet eyes, and hair of burnished gold. Barbara's hair was brown; warmly, duskily brown, to be sure, but undeniably brown; her eyes also, but with little flecks of gold in the iris, and an imp of laughter seeming ever to lurk in their depths, prepared at the slightest provocation to leap over into that deep and whimsical dimple in her left cheek.

Barbara's chin was too prominent for beauty, and her eyebrows, she complained, weren't mates; but for all these defects she was what the "fellows" of her day characterized as "a reg'lar peach"—the girls, perhaps, being somewhat less enthusiastic; while their elders declared approvingly that she "had no nonsense about her."

And she hadn't. All through the years when little girls are growing to be big girls, and do a great deal of whispering and giggling about the little boys who are growing to be big boys, Barbara Ann remained a little girl at heart, though her mind grew and broadened and her body developed as a normal, healthy girl's should. . . . And then one day she grew up.

It was Easter morning, and Barbara was six-



teen. The little gray-stone church was filled with the joyous lilt of Easter music, the colorful fragrance of Easter bloom. Golden daffodils shed their radiance like tall candles upon the altar—St. Barnabas' wasn't "high" enough for real candles in those days; and even in the pews the floral display was not to be disdained, massed in gay profusion on the ladies' hats and pinned to their gowns—a garden that literally had blossomed overnight, for those were the days when Easter garments were for Easter, and we wore our winter dresses and coats and velvet hats up to the very night before, regardless of the weather; and then with the dawn of Easter day, come rain or shine, snow or hail, we burst into bloom, utterly dazzling the eye attuned to the drab of Lenten sackcloth.

Miss Emily Rossiter, we remember, always appeared at church on Good Friday clad in the deepest of mourning, but most correct and fashionable mourning, you may be sure, sable-hued to the last pin. A "crape" veil of prodigious length shrouded her to the knees; a breastpin of dull jet fastened her collar; at intervals during the service she wept into a black-bordered handkerchief; . . . and now behold her hat of lilac straw with its wreath of velvet pansies that matched her gown; her white gloves, her amethyst brooch, the sweet peas, Stafford's choicest and best, at her girdle—a great eye for color had Miss Emily Rossiter!

Barbara wore violets, Jimmy's gift, and was like a flower herself, garbed as befitted sixteen on Easter morning. Even Uncle Ben felt the influence of the day, and had added a deep red carnation to the holiday splendor of "Prince Albert" and tall silk hat.

This service marked Jimmy's return to the choir after his enforced absence, and lavishly had he justified their hopes of him. His voice, a clear baritone, behaved perfectly, and would gain in strength and resonance as it matured. Uncle Ben and Aunt Cindy rivaled Mrs. Landridge in pride of possession; wasn't Jimmy "their boy," too?

The service was drawing to a close. "The peace of God, which passeth understanding—" Mr. Seabrooke began, hands upraised above his kneeling congregation. . . . Never had the beautiful words of benediction seemed so tender, so fraught with personal meaning, to the young girl who knelt with face and heart uplifted, all aglow with religious fervor. . . . Like a trumpet call, the first notes of the recessional pealed out over the hushed throng, and Barbara rose with the rest to the stirring measures of the ancient hymn, her eyes, still misty with emotion, fixed upon the double line of surplices streaming from the choir stalls. Down the chancel steps they came, led by little Billy Harbie bearing high the gleaming cross. As usual Billy looked more angelic than any stained-glass cherub, nor did the well-known fact that his Sunday face was widely at variance with his week-day behavior, suffice to spoil the picture. It was a scene carelessly familiar to Barbara's eye through years of accustomedness; but today she was seeing it with her heart, and it took on new beauty—the stately procession of singing men and boys . . . here a dash of scarlet in the edge of a hymnal, picked out against the black and white of cassock and cotta . . . there a face transfigured—

The littlest boys had reached the Adams pew

now. "All the winter of our sins, Long and dark is flying—" rose the clear young voices in crescendo. . . . Now Jimmy, in his new place among the men, was but a half dozen pews distant; Barbara could distinguish his voice, separate it from the others, purer, sweeter than any—than Mr. Phillips' even, who had studied abroad. Barbara thrilled with pride—or *was* it?

"Comes to glad Jerusalem,  
Who with true affection—"

Suddenly Jimmy raised his eyes and looked straight into hers. . . . And something happened to Barbara Ann. The throng of worshippers faded into oblivion; the church was strangely, gloriously empty of all save herself and Jimmy for that one long moment during which their eyes held, startled, grave—

Barbara was very quiet when Jimmy joined them for the walk home, nor was Jimmy his usual cheerfully loquacious self. She thanked him for her violets, shyly offering him the one tiny half-opened pink rose from the center of the bunch, to put in his coat. He looked down at it, an odd little smile on his lips. "It's like *you*, Barbara!" he exclaimed softly, with a quick, half-startled glance at her, so slim and straight and radiant beside him.

Barbara could not speak of his singing, but Aunt Cindy said it was splendid, and Uncle Ben clapped him affectionately on the shoulder. "No, I'm sorry," he said to Aunt Cindy, "I promised Mother I'd be home—"

Barbara was glad. She didn't want, just then, to talk to Jimmy about such things as passing the



biscuits, and would he like some more pudding!

That afternoon Barbara asked Aunt Cindy if she couldn't put up her hair, and have her dresses a little longer. "I'm sixteen now, you know, and lots of the girls have done theirs up for ages. Can't I, Aunt Cindy?"

Again the gate of Yesterday had closed behind Barbara Ann, and she stood, half reluctant, within the garden of Today.

## X

To outward seeming, things went on about as usual between Barbara and Jim, though now and again, as they chummed around together, the boy would encounter some slight barrier of reserve which had not obtained in their old intimacy, but which he found pleasantly stimulating, even in his bewilderment; and to Barbara there was unwonted sweetness in the thought that Jimmy would be waiting for her after school; that "Are you going?" to this festivity or that was but another way of saying, "We're going, aren't we?" Sweet, too, was that strange new thrill when he was near; sweet, even, that curious aching loneliness when he wasn't.

But there was no sweetness whatever in a certain little stabbing pain in Barbara's throat, which seemingly had to do with the sight of Jimmy in the company of another girl. It didn't often happen. Girls in general were mere incidents in Jimmy's young life; Barbara was a habit. You didn't need to entertain Barbara, nor think up things to talk about. "You just talked, if you felt like it, and if you didn't, you didn't hafta." And another thing about Barbara: she wasn't forever on her ear about little things, like starting in to whistle on the street when she was along, or forgetting to pop up out of your chair the minute she came in the room. Some of the girls were like that; Stella Martine, now. Once when Barbara and Aunt Cindy were at Asbury for a month, Stella had taken him in hand—Whew!

Jimmy had an uncomfortable feeling that Stella wasn't through with him yet, and he was ruder, perhaps, than he need have been, but Stella seemed undismayed. Her bright "I'll play for you, Jimmy!" to the crowd's "Aw, c'mon, Jim, chirp up! Givvus a song!" brought on many a sudden cold, advertised by a cough which, if real, would surely have done for Jimmy in something less than a week!

Twice Stella made her kind offer in Barbara's hearing; and then it was that Mr. Horace Nichols received the shock of his career.

For the first time since she began to "take" of Miss Hortense Sturges at the age of nine, Barbara applied herself to her music in a way that would have been heart-warming to Miss Hortense, had she been there to see. For the past year or two Barbara had been "taking" of Mr. Nichols, who had a whole dollar a lesson instead of fifty cents, but still she hadn't been able to work up much enthusiasm. Aunt Cindy, who didn't know the meaning of the word "penurious," sighed over that dollar a lesson, but Grandma Ferriss insisted. In *her* day young ladies who were so fortunate as to have a musical instrument in the house, learned to play on it! So the lessons went on, but Barbara learned not—for no reason whatever, Mr. Nichols said, except that she didn't want to.

"Old Nick" was quite dazed by the miracle, while Barbara's family grew perplexed to the point of anxiety. None of them, you see, knew anything about that queer little pain Barbara felt at sight of Jimmy standing beside another girl at the piano. But Barbara knew, and her fingers grew strong and supple with long, patient hours of scales and chords and arpeggios; the loathed



"finger exercises" thumped incessant rhythm on book and dinner table—on the edge of the dishpan, even! Life, for Barbara Ann, became just one étude after another.

She begged for longer lessons, and got them, and begged for more. Couldn't she have *two* lessons a week, Aunt Cindy, if she would do *all* the ironing, and take care of Grandma's room as well as her own? . . . And when Stella on a third occasion was about to offer her services as accompanist, her mouth fell open, and then closed with a snap; for Barbara was already at the piano, running over with expert touch, the prelude to the then ubiquitous "Holy City!"

It didn't stop there. Anxious to do her best for Jimmy, to acquit herself well in his eyes, Barbara continued to study and to practice, though to a less alarming extent, till Jimmy came quite to depend on her, each rejoicing in secret over this further bond between them. Not that Barbara, for all her eager industry, played better than the other girls; Stella herself far outdid her in the carelessly brilliant strumming which was known in their set as "playing the piano"; but where Jimmy was concerned, Barbara developed a sort of sixth sense which in time made her an almost perfect accompanist, merging her personality in that of the singer, making the piano an echo, an undercurrent, a complement of the song.

Mrs. Landridge firmly believed in her son's future as a singer, and ambitiously planned for him an operatic career—so many years abroad when he should have finished college, loud-heralded triumphs at Paris and Milan, the glory of a Metropolitan *premiere*. In all of which, however,

she reckoned without the future star himself. Jimmy had other plans, with music definitely relegated to the sidelines. An ignoble ambition was Jimmy's; he would be an architect, a mere craftsman of the compass and the T-square, a planner of kitchens and clubs and towering temples of trade. From his earliest building-block days, elevations and floor-plans had been his delight; and cherished above all other possessions were sundry discarded drawings and blueprints from the office of Osgood, Harper and Osgood, of Chicago; which Mr. Harper, knowing of the boy's interest, had sent him from time to time. Mr. Harper had been a friend of Jimmy's father, and to Jimmy, was a god but one seat lower on Olympus than the dimly-remembered "Papa" of his babyhood.

There came a time when Jimmy had need of all his gods; for he found out that which it is not well for any boy to know—that the mother he adored had feet of clay. She did not understand; she had no sympathy with his hopes and ambitions; she wanted to plan his life, and—darn it, it wasn't fair! It wasn't as if he wanted to go devilling around all the time and not do any work or anything; all he wanted was *his* work, the work he liked and knew he could do. And maybe it *was* childish, as she had said, but he *wanted* those blueprints . . . and she had burned them! Gee!—when a fellow's mother didn't play fair! . . . What if they did litter up his room, and all that? It was *his* room. Couldn't a fellow have any place at all to keep his things? . . . You could learn a lot from blueprints—Mr. Harper said so himself, and studying those drawings *wasn't* "moonning around." His mother seemed to think that now they were out of the way he

could practise more. All *right!* Just for that, he wouldn't practise at all. He'd show 'em!

Not for nothing was that lower lip of Jimmy's. His mother argued and entreated, finally with tears. Jimmy was quite polite about it. But Jimmy did not sing . . . Until a day when there arrived another big roll of drawings from Chicago.

He took them upstairs, looked them over leisurely, and having locked them in his desk, came down and went to the piano for his usual daily quota of Ah-ah-ah-ah-ah-ah-ahs and Ho-ho-ho-ho-ho-ho-hos. Every day after that, he practised; first inspecting the hiding-place of his treasures, however, to make sure they hadn't followed the others furnace-ward. Once and for all, Jimmy had untied his mother's apron strings!

It made the final rebellion the easier. For the subject was not yet closed, although by mutual consent they ignored the incident of the burned blueprints. Jimmy's voice was a God-given asset, his mother averred, and plainly it would be flying in the face of Providence if he failed to collect the wages of fame and fortune to which such a talent entitled him. His appearance and personality, too—no use in being modest unto absurdity; Jimmy *was* good to look at. Of ungainly height, but saved from ungainliness by the loose symmetry of well-trained muscles, and by broad shoulders which never had learned that unconscious stoop of the too-tall boy endeavoring to hide his superabundant inches. The blond curls which had been his childish detestation had darkened perceptibly, and had been brushed and flattened and close-clipped until one would scarce suspect the slight ripple he tried so hard to sub-



due. For the rest, frank blue eyes with level brows, a good forehead and square chin combined to make one overlook the lips a trifle too soft and full, the lower one especially, giving just a hint of stubbornness and sensuality to an otherwise most satisfactory face.

Jimmy was ready to concede his equipment, being neither more nor less vain than the average of his age and sex. But, as he patiently explained, the fact that they had stationary tubs in the basement didn't make it obligatory for his mother to take in washing! And a fellow didn't *hafta* have a face like a fried egg, to be an architect! His mother needn't worry about his voice, either—it wouldn't be wasted. He'd always sing; glad to, if only he didn't have to do it for a living. Not any "Little Tommy Tucker" in Jimmy's, thank you! How'd she know, anyhow, that he'd ever be able to earn his supper, singing, not to mention his other meals, which he also liked with considerable regularity? How could Ole Nick know, or anybody, till he, Jimmy, had gone and spent years 'n' years studying, and then maybe made a fizzle of it after all?

But there were ways, apparently. Old Nick explained, and a compromise was effected. Jimmy, after a preliminary period of intensive study and a final polish, was to go up to New York with Mr. Nichols, who would arrange to have the boy sing before a certain famous impresario, by whose decision both mother and son agreed to abide.

The day of the hearing found Jimmy in two minds as to whether he hadn't better sing as badly as he could, and so squash the matter for good and all; but in the end he cast the thought from him.

Jimmy was square; he wouldn't doublecross his mother nor make a goat of good Ole Nick. Pride, too, took a hand—a fellow would feel like a dub, up there before all those people; quite an unnecessary number, it seemed to him, though scattered about the great empty theatre in a way to accentuate its emptiness.

The wings were full of 'em, too, mostly young ladies in what Jimmy thought rather outlandish costumes, and other ladies, not so young, in costumes still more outlandish—at least they looked worse. At close range he failed to recognize the Gilda, the Amneris, the Marguerite of the operas his mother had insisted on as part of his education. He only knew that there were far too many for his comfort and tranquility of mind.

And each with a retinue of two or three or more—teachers, he supposed, and mothers and aunts and things. *His* mother had been keen on coming along, but thank goodness he'd had the sense to put his foot down on that, hard, and for a wonder Ole Nick had upheld him. If she had been there, fussing around like that ole warhorse with the skinny daughter who had just gone on, he'd have bolted; yes, sir, that's what he'd have done, bolted!

. . . Gosh! That girl must think she's the siren on Chemical No. 2. Well, he'd give her the road any day! . . . Jimmy, watching Herr Schmidt from the wings, gathered that his opinion coincided with Jimmy's to some extent.

Some of them weren't so bad, Jimmy thought, if only they wouldn't be all day about it. He wanted to get down to Cooper Union before it closed, to see an exhibition of water colors on landscape gardening; but his number was at the very bottom of the list, right after a huge Brunn-

hilde who looked as if she had within the cavernous depths of her a voice to summon forth to battle untold legions of warriors, dead or alive. She stalked upon the stage with a curious dragging step, as if suspicious of thin ice somewhere about; she arranged her mouth to permit egress of a clarion "Yo-ho-to-ho"—and lo! The mountain labored and brought forth a mouse—squeak and all!

Herr Schmidt writhed, and being a kindly man, passed to his secretary the task of informing Brunnhilde that the sooner she hunted up Siegfried and moved into her cave, the better. A good husky Siegfried in the carpentering or plumbing line, or a grocer, maybe. Somebody who liked vaudeville and bid euchre and beefsteak with plenty of onions.

And now Jimmy's hour had struck, and while, of course, he wasn't what you'd call scairt, exactly, still he did hope they couldn't see his knees wobble, out in front. Jimmy didn't give a darn whether they liked his voice or not, but a fellow hated to have his legs act silly!

Then suddenly from out the draughty shadows of the house came a sneeze, loud, laughter-provoking; not a regular, rousing "ker-choo!" but a sort of shrill cacchination, a dozen times repeated, rising in stuttering crescendo to a final whoop of exhaustion. "Ah-a-a-aaah-heh-heh-heh-heh-heh-heh-heh-*heh*-WHOO-OO-OO!" sneezed the unseen—and Jimmy forgot his knees. He grinned widely; then, finding his mouth already open, he began to sing! And since he didn't care a hoot one way or the other, he sang well, and Old Nick beamed with pride in his pupil.

Herr Schmidt, looking up from the memoran-



dum in his hand, which set forth that number 11 was not a candidate for operatic honors, but merely sought an opinion as to the possibilities of his voice, saw a fresh-faced, overgrown boy in his best clothes, who grinned cheerfully and without visible awe, while the pianist played the opening bars of his song. He sang it in understandable English, in tune, and in a voice that showed no sign of lifting the building from its foundation, though clearly he wasn't forcing it. A good deal of natural sweetness of tone, which hadn't yet been trained out, and lacking a number of things that hadn't yet been trained in. A pleasant voice to listen to—altogether, Herr Schmidt found refreshment in number 11, following an afternoon of numbers 1 to 10, inclusive!

A little later Jimmy found himself looking inquiringly into a pair of twinkling eyes, very blue, very sharp; and because he couldn't at the moment think of anything sensible to say, he grinned. The twinkling eyes twinkled harder, and Herr Schmidt asked Jimmy why he wanted to sing in opera. Jimmy replied that he didn't, particularly, unless he could be a crackerjack at it!

It took Herr Schmidt a full minute to assimilate "crackerjack"; which being accomplished, he twinkled more than ever. Perhaps after all this wasn't going to be so bad. As a rule Herr Schmidt didn't relish the demolition of aircastles—the occupants were apt to take it pretty hard; frequently they shed tears and occasionally even fainted in the dressing rooms. This boy didn't *look* agitated, but you couldn't always tell. . .

Jimmy's instrument had sweetness and volume, said Herr Schmidt; he hadn't been as badly taught as most of 'em, so far as he had gone,

which wasn't very far; he was young and his voice should grow and mature with his years; but—well, er—ahem! To be quite frank, and—er—not to raise false hopes, you know, and—er, ahem! Mr. Landridge should do well in recital, in concert or the choir; he could, of course, study for opera if he wished—he might find others who would so advise him; “But me,” concluded Herr Schmidt, “I think not that you efer, Mr. Landridge, become what you call ‘the crack-a-jack’!”

Nothing in all Herr Schmidt's experience had prepared him for Jimmy's radiant smile, the ecstatic incoherence of his thanks. Here was no crestfallen youth to rush forth to some desperate deed in a frenzy of disappointment and wounded vanity! Jimmy couldn't seem to thank him enough; he shook hands twice and went out beaming!

To her credit be it said that Mrs. Landridge accepted her defeat with grace and gallantry, though it certainly was a blow. There would be no headlines, no plaudits of the multitude, for James Warren Landridge, a mere builder of paper houses; which same plaudits would have been sweet indeed to the mother of James Warren Landridge. Well, she must make the best of it, for the present; James might change his mind, and as for that crabbed old Dutchman—Pshaw! What did one man's opinion amount to? Very likely his sauer-kraut and sausages had disagreed with him, or whatever it was that German impresarios had for lunch; or James may have been nervous. On the other hand was Mr. Nichols' assurance that this Schmidt usually knew what he was talking about, incredible as it seemed in this instance. Oh, dear, it certainly was very trying;

but apparently there wasn't anything to do just now except to drop the matter, as she had promised; she could easily take it up again in case James showed symptoms of wavering in his devotion to the stupid cross sections and dot-and-dash lines—whatever they might be—that he was forever muddling with.

So Jimmy, at peace with the world, settled again to his school work, intent on graduation and the two years of college which he had conceded to his mother's views. At first she had held out for a full course with an A. B. at the end in orthodox fashion, while Jimmy had declared for its entire elimination; but Mrs. Landridge had dwelt upon the cultural as well as the practical value of a college education to the truly great in architecture as in other fields, and once again they had compromised.

At one time, however, when Jimmy mentioned his choice of an Alma Mater, it looked as if negotiations were going on the rocks. Chicago! But *why*, for goodness' sake? Weren't there colleges enough right here in the East? And Columbia and Princeton both, one might say, at his very door—

Jimmy had the answer in his pocket, in a letter from Mr. Harper. It was in reply to one of Jimmy's, and offered an opportunity to put in his spare time working in the Osgood, Harper and Osgood offices, if he should decide to come to Chicago; salary not large, but practical working experience—immense! Two years, planned Jimmy, and then Paris and the long-dreamed-of Beaux Arts, if he worked very hard indeed; and *wouldn't* he work, though!

He and Barbara had talked it all over, dozens



of times; it was such fun to plan together! They talked of the wonderful commissions Jimmy would get, and he explained about an idea he had for a library—not just a place to get books and tiptoe about and talk in whispers, but a sort of community club house, with billiards and a sun parlor and swimming pool, and illuminated tennis courts for evening play. *That* sort of thing would be worth while, wouldn't it?

Barbara rather thought she should write; poems, perhaps, but *real* poems like *Hiawatha*, not just little things that they print in magazines when the end of the story doesn't reach quite to the bottom of the page. Though, of course, at first one might have to do most anything in order to get a start. Already Barbara had had some verses printed in the *Courier*, and had written a patriotic poem which Miss Welch, the singing teacher at school, had set to music for the Memorial Day exercises. . . . Or maybe she would write novels, and become very rich and famous, like Mrs. Humphrey Ward.

So Jimmy and Barbara Ann planned and dreamed, but always of their work, never of themselves. And they went together to parties and things, and Jimmy sang and Barbara played his accompaniments. What dear, happy times those were! Everyone liked Jimmy, and Barbara, too, was popular in the way that shy and quiet people often are; yet she frankly envied those other girls who by some delightful necromancy seemed always able to surround themselves with boys in swarms, like bees around a honeysuckle vine. She would have been greatly astonished could she have known that scarcely one of those same boys

who flocked so gayly to the banners of Stella Martine and of Ethel Harbie, for example, but had more than once looked after Barbara's pretty figure as she met Jimmy after school, and wished Jim Landridge would go chase himself, and give a feller a chance!

In particular there was Amory Booth. Barbara liked Amory, and Amory—well, there was always Jimmy, and Jimmy was Amory's pal. A fellow may feel liking and even a degree of reverence for his chum's girl, if he will, but alas, no more than that, not even with encouragement. And Barbara quite frankly "liked Amory a lot," and that was all there was *to* it. Her very frankness made it the more hopeless for Amory.

Conforming likewise to the custom of her day and age which decreed side-partners of the same sex as well as twosing with the opposite one, Barbara had paired off with Ethel Harbie after Kitty Breen left school to enter "Business College." This had been during their first year in High School. Pardon! Freshman year, I should have said. These collegiate terms were very important when one was in "High." The school grounds, a half block in extent, spread out imposingly as The Campus; the chapter from the Bible, followed by the Lord's Prayer and sometimes a five-minute talk by Prof. Stone, was, of course, Chapel; the Prof. himself was known as "Prexy"; Cuts and Conditions and Semesters and Frats tripped glibly from the tongue—oh, yes, about Kitty. Kitty now occupied a little glassed-in cage beside the door in Fullerton's Fish Market, dispensing change and sprightly conversation; but it was rumored that Fullerton's customers were soon to receive these blessings at the hand of another.

Barbara herself often met Kitty "out walking" with young Billy Gerachty, who was, she informed Barbara, her "steady."

It set Barbara wondering about Jimmy. Could she, if she wished, properly refer to him as *her* steady? He was steady enough, goodness knew, so far as companionship went, but as yet nothing had been *said* about it; and Barbara gathered from her reading and other sources that things usually were said, very interesting things, before you and your steady really *belonged*. She was always making up in her mind the kind of things she would like to have Jimmy say to her—splendid things, ringing, heroic things; but Jimmy, serenely unconscious, failed to play up. He just kept on being the same old Jimmy, sans heroism, sans eloquence, sans, in fact, many attributes of the marvellous young men she found between the covers of her books, from Ivanhoe to Marie Cor-elli. Sometimes she felt that Amory might make a more satisfactory hero of romance. At least he would look the part—darkly handsome, with features that might have been limned by the great Charles Dana himself, and a certain melancholy beauty of expression which blond men never seem able to achieve.

There was one other of the boys who made no secret of the fact that Barbara Ann found favor in his eyes. His name was Chester Liddell—*Liddell*, of course, though his grandfather had accented the first syllable instead, and there were those who still *Liddled* the family, to the intense disgust of Mrs. *Liddell*. To Barbara, a Liddell by whatever name was anathema; for Barbara loathed Chester with a great and boundless loathing.



It wasn't his looks entirely, though Chester was far from handsome; it wasn't that he lacked brains, for in school he led his classes to such an extent that Jimmy once remarked in discouragement, "Gee, if Ches is the head of the class and the rest of us are the body, then all I've got to say is—that this class has got a darned long neck!" It wasn't his manners, which were a shade *too* perfect; nor even his voice, which was many shades too soft and smooth. Pressed for a reason for her dislike, Barbara could offer none more logical than that he was fat, and looked like a codfish!

The fact is that Chester was what is called "odd," and "being odd" is youth's one unforgivable sin. To most of the girls he was a joke; to Barbara he was a tragedy. Every opportunity found him at her elbow, snubs and slights being to his persistence as a spring shower to a duck. He was forever cutting in ahead of Jimmy when he could, at dances, and going home from school and from evening service; though *that* she might have condoned, if he hadn't been such an ab-sul-lute freak! The name stuck. Chester became "Freak" Liddell to them all, and "Freak" he remained through school and college, and on into a bald and substantial middle age.

Yet it was he who caused the first real quarrel between Barbara and Jim. It happened in their "Senior" year. Mrs. Landridge had been ill, and Jimmy, in consequence, out of school for a week or two, leaving Barbara utterly at the mercy of the detestable Chester. Not even Amory was there for her protection as heretofore, gratefully accepting such crumbs of her companionship as might fall to the lot of a mere deputy; Amory,

graduated the previous June, was at Columbia this year, and came home only for week ends and holidays. And Chester, pursuing the course that made him dean of a mid-western university at thirty-four, saw his opportunity and grasped it.

Skillfully as Barbara sought to evade him, yet more skillful was he in bringing about "chance" meetings, so that more than once Jimmy glimpsed them from a distance, walking home from school together, or coming from the library or the post office. And then one evening Jimmy had come to call, and there was the "Freak" stretched at his ease in Jimmy's favorite porch chair, with Barbara sitting straight and prim and very much flushed, on the extreme edge of another, as if poised for instant flight.

Curtly refusing Barbara's flustered tender of a chair, Jimmy perched upon the railing and proceeded to make himself about as charming and agreeable as a young grizzly. Conversation languished. Yes, it was a nice enough night. Ye-ah, a little chilly. Didn't know whether he'd go to the clambake Sat-day or not. His mother was better, thanks. He'd be back in school tomorrow, he guessed . . . Till even Chester's obtuseness felt the tension, and he took himself off, wondering what any girl could see in an old grouch like that!

It seemed to Barbara that she *never* had been so glad to see Jimmy, and she had begun to tell him so, when he interrupted, growling grizzly-wise: "Yes, you did! You musta missed me the deuce of a lot!"—with as villainous a sneer as he could contrive with a set of features which obviously were never meant for sneering. "Huh! Nice consolation you picked, 'sall I gotta say!

For the love of *mud*, Barbara, if you've *got* to have a fellow around every minute, can't you scrape up something that at least *looks* human—" Jimmy choked, while Barbara stared in hurt amazement.

Now, of course, Jimmy wasn't really jealous of the "Freak." That would have been too absurd, as he very well knew; but something within him, something masculine and possessive and untamed, rose up and smote him sharply a little to the left of the wishbone, at sight of the two—together, silent, and obviously perturbed at his coming. Jimmy told himself he wouldn't have minded if it had been any one else; Amory, or Bull Smith, or Ted Rossiter or any of the fellows in their own crowd; good fellows all, with whom a girl might laugh and dance and—well, even flirt a little, maybe—and it wouldn't mean a thing. But this rank outsider, this "Freak" person—Gosh!

Now this evening it had happened that Barbara, hearing a step on the porch, had dashed out, fully expecting to see Jimmy, and had discovered her mistake too late to slip back and send Aunt Cindy to the door instead. Seeing no escape, she sat down as far as possible from her unwelcome caller, the while she racked her brain for means of deliverance. The smitten youth changed his seat for one nearer. At once Barbara moved to a chair still farther away, at which Chester repeated his manoeuver; and when Jimmy arrived the two were engaged in a sedate game of tag, with Chester "it"! Chester was deadly serious, but Barbara had much ado to keep her countenance; it would be the *richest* thing to tell Jimmy and the girls! And here, glory be! was Jimmy, and what a laugh they'd have when the "Freak" had gone!



But *wh-what's this?* Well, Mr. High-and-Mighty! "*Got to have a fellow around,*" did you say? And "*scrape up*" something . . . . Barbara stiffened, and with icy distinctness requested to be informed in regard to the date upon which she had asked Jimmy to select her friends for her. (Friend, forsooth, and Barbara fairly shuddering her dislike of him that very minute!)

"Oh, very well, if that's the way you feel about it!" And Jimmy got up from the railing and marched off without another word.

How Barbara got to her room she hardly knew. At first, anger burned up every other emotion. That Jimmy could have so misunderstood, could have spoken so contemptuously to her—"Got to have" and "Scrape up!"—to her, Barbara Thair, almost finically fastidious in her associations! And from Jimmy, her good pal almost from babyhood! Whatever had come over him, to blow up over nothing that way? If he was tired of going around with her, why didn't he say so instead of picking a silly quarrel? . . . Came then to Barbara Ann a vision of long, Jimmy-less days, and the tears came at last; she cried herself to sleep.

Jimmy, meanwhile, was having rather a bad time of it himself. The first flush of his indignation past, he didn't feel nearly so pleased with himself as he had expected. He found leisure to reflect that Barbara hadn't looked so awf'ly happy in the "Freak's" company, at that. Hang it all, he guessed he'd oughta given her a chance to explain, anyhow. . . . 'Course, Barbara got mad too . . . but he was mad first . . . and—well, hang it, he s'posed he might have asked her, first off, how come she forgot to sweep the

porch that morning—sarcastic, you know, like that. He'd see her tomorrow, after school, and make up—if *she* would. Gee, he couldn't stand it not to be friends with Barbara! . . . Jimmy buried his face in the pillow.

On the morrow, however, Barbara was not in her classes, and when Jimmy, half sick with apprehension, went down to the house after school, he was met by Aunt Cindy with the news that Barbara had a bad headache and had been in bed all day. Good Lord! Barbara never had headaches! Aunt Cindy hid a smile at the boy's stricken face; she pulled him down to her and whispered; Jimmy stared, gave Aunt Cindy a great bear-hug, and was off like a shot.

An hour later Barbara was opening a long pasteboard box whose cover bore the magic name "Stafford" in flourishy script. Within were roses, the half-blown pink ones that Jimmy had said were like *her*. And a note in Jimmy's dear familiar hand—small and even, almost like print; so absurdly at variance with the bigness of the hand that wrote it, so reminiscent of the hieroglyphics that adorned his beloved plans and blueprints.

"Barbara girl"—it ran, her first love letter—"I was a beast. I just couldn't bear to see you going around with that darned old owl. I ought to have known you couldn't help it. I'm sorry as anything. If I catch him bothering you again I'll paste him one in the snoot. I hope your headache will be all right tomorrow so you can see me and tell me everything's all right. Yours, Jim."

## XI

“Commencement week” was ever a season of high festivity in this little tidewater town, as in most other towns of its size up and down the land. Unlatch for a moment the gate of yesterday’s garden, and peep through the crack at your own commencement week. ’Member the collegiate airs the High School put on, with its Baccalaureate sermon on the Sunday evening, preached by the Methodist minister, or the Baptist, or Presbyterian, or Episcopal, each in his turn, so there wouldn’t be any hard feelings; even the “Catholic priest” being included if you were a broad-minded community, or his reverence happened to be personally popular, like Father Christian, whose turn it was the year Barbara and Jimmy graduated.

Monday, or maybe Tuesday, would be Class Day, occasion of quips and jibes and merry jests, when you got off your class song and your class poem and your class yell, and handed out sage advice to the Junior Class and presents to the faculty—or was it the other way ’round? No, it was the faculty that got the egg-beater and the bottle of cough syrup and the doormat with “Welcome” on it, though for the life of us we can’t remember why!

And the class prophecy—gracious, yes, the prophecy! What a mercy those prophecies almost never come true! What a world it would be, peopled exclusively by senators and bishops and doctors and diplomats and poets and artists and



admirals and the like! And whatever should we do for dressmakers and street-car conductors and grocers and postmen and janitors—and babies!

Then about Wednesday came Commencement proper, in the Opera House, with Tryon's orchestra to discourse incidental music. The faculty and the "Board" sat upon a semicircle of yellow-varnished kitchen chairs before the pillared portico on the back drop; the graduates in a flutter and white organdie, or in new shoes and neckties and a state of extreme nervousness, being similarly arranged in the full brilliance of the footlights. If you wore organdie, you read an essay on some vital topic like "Famous Queens of History," and showed up Cleopatra and Mary Queen of Scots and Marie Antoinette and the rest, quite as they deserved; or if you were of the new-shoe-and-necktie contingent, you proceeded oratorically to settle the affairs of state and nation, with gestures carefully inserted in the proper places. Commencement is no fun nowadays; they get a speaker from out of town, and he speaks, and you sit and listen. You could have a van load of flowers and nobody'd be the wiser. Not like the old days, with the ushers handing up sheaves of roses and carnations over the footlights, and you in white organdie, laden with the spoils of greenhouse and garden, sweeping a radiant curtesy as you backed into your place in the semicircle. We don't remember whether the boys got flowers too; if they did, white organdie doubtless added those to her collection in the course of the evening!

Afterward, soft music by the orchestra, while the "sheepskins," printed on heavy white paper suitable for framing, were distributed, each rolled into a tube and tied with the class colors. Bar-

bara's class chose red, white, and blue, because that year everyone was in quite a state of patriotism over our little fracas with Don Spaniard. And so they were graduated, thus automatically attaining membership in the Red Haven High School Alumni Association; or *almost* automatically: there was the small matter of a fee—a quarter, was it, or half a dollar?

That let you in on the banquet Thursday evening at W. C. T. U. Hall; a regular "course dinner" with printed menus, and toasts responded to by Doctor Strang for the "old grads"; by Mr. Doxtader, the druggist, for the school board; by Mr. Smyllie, the science teacher, for the faculty; and by William Smith—the "Bull" Smith of former days—for the newest alumni. This being William's maiden appearance as an after-dinner speaker, he was considerably "rattled," as we expressed it then; so much so that when he rose to begin with great formality, "Mr. President: Ladies and Gentlemen:" he quite inadvertently bowed to pretty Elsie Ansley, who sat opposite, instead of to portly Henry Corbin, '89, at the head of the table. After that, however, he got on very well, and spoke with great force and discrimination, according to the *Weekly Courier*.

Ah! but Friday night! Then came the crowning event of the week—nay, of the entire year—the Senior Ball. The local orchestra, while very well in its way, was not to be thought of on this occasion; so an organization of assorted strings, woodwinds and brasses was brought down from the city, which if it didn't play any better, at any rate cost much more, which was very gratifying indeed.

In those days before the advent of the "cheek-

to-cheek'' dance, when even the one-step, the hesitation and the fox-trot would have been deemed importations direct from the workshop of the Evil One; when our elders, at least, would have perished with horror could they have but imagined the iniquities of the bunny hug, the toddle and the "shimmy"—we danced, in those days, waltzes and two-steps in alternation, with one or two quadrilles or Lancers for the benefit of such older people as might be frivolously inclined. The ball opened with a grand march, formed to the blare of trumpets at nine o'clock precisely—an hour delightfully late and citified—and led this particular year by Amory Booth and Ethel Harbie, the handsomest couple on the floor. Barbara was lovely in her new party frock of shimmering rose; most of the girls had new ones, though you *could* wear your commencement dress, of course. Jimmy had sent roses to match her gown, and had come for her in a cab, himself looking perfectly splendid in his first "dress suit" and white gloves. Oh, we are very grown-up indeed, at seventeen-and-a-half and almost-nineteen!

The last vacation with Jimmy at home was a wonder-time to Barbara Ann. There was all their dear camaraderie of old, and beneath it some new element, strange and sweet, a something that made Jimmy very tender and gentle toward Barbara, and oddly solicitous for her safety and comfort; something which impelled him to a steadying touch as she stepped lightly aboard "Lucinda Jane," or to lend an assisting hand up to the float, when they swam together at the beach; Barbara, who had ever been more than sufficient unto herself in all such matters! And for Jimmy,



Barbara donned her prettiest frocks, and did all she knew to make herself lovely in his eyes; for Jimmy, who had raced with her barefoot, squabbled with her in pinafores, and admired her in sweeping cap and apron, helping Aunt Cindy with housewifely zeal!

His appreciation was instant and boyish, and none the less profound for being expressed in the argot of his day and age instead of in the Cambridge English Barbara thought she wanted to hear. "Say, Bobs, d'ya know you're one dandy girl?" was his tribute oft-repeated, with slight variations; his eyes, however, speaking a language Boston itself could not have bettered, a language that was universal some thousands of years before the dawn of Esperanto and its ilk.

The evening before his departure for Chicago and the beginning of his Career, he came to bid Barbara good-bye. They had the porch quite to themselves, Uncle Ben being reminded by Aunt Cindy of a certain important letter to be written forthwith, and she going along herself to make sure that he wrote it; and Grandma Ferriss having fled the perils of the night air along about mid-afternoon, as was her custom. There was a very satisfactory moon; the mild September night held the faintest hint of approaching autumn in its odor of hardy blossom and occasional falling leaf. Some one in the neighborhood had a bonfire; the air was filled with its pungent aroma, so different from that of brush fires in the spring, or of common bonfires at any season.

The coming separation weighed upon the spirits of both. They spoke little, and of commonplace things; so that when Jimmy rose, reluctantly, to

take his leave, whole dictionaries of pent-up speech seemed still to lie between them.

“Well, I’ll be home Christmas, I guess—” he began matter-of-factly, and took Barbara’s outstretched hand. For a moment he held it in the firm clasp which was Jimmy’s customary handshake; then for another—and another—and another—and ever so many more he held it, for sheer inability to let it go again. Till the little god Eros whispered in his subconscious ear a simple problem in mathematics, i. e., that one thrill multiplied by two equals two thrills; whereupon Jimmy possessed himself of Barbara’s other hand.

“Why, *Barbara* girl! Not *crying*, dear! Ah, don’t, Honey, don’t—you *mustn’t* do that! Why, will you miss me so much?” he asked, curiously.

Something in his voice set Barbara’s lips a-quiver so that she could not answer; she closed her eyes to keep back the tears she did not want him to see—and swifter than thought she was in his arms, held so close that she could feel the pounding of his heart above her own. His kisses sealed her eyelids, caressed her slim throat, painted her cheeks . . . . Then the earth swayed and stood still, as their lips met . . . .

“Oh, my *Barbara* girl! I never dreamed it could be so sweet!” Jimmy caught his breath with a little laugh that was half a sob. “*Barbara*, you *are* my girl, aren’t you, darling?” he whispered; “—always and forever, dear, you’re *my* girl?”

Tenderly he stroked the dark head, awkwardly he patted the quivering shoulder, waiting for her to speak. “Say it, sweetheart!” he begged, when he could bear the suspense no longer.

And then at last she raised her head, and there was all the love of all the world shining in her tear-wet eyes. "Always and forever, Jimsy, *your girl!*" she answered very softly.

While he lived Jim Landridge was to keep the vision of her as she stood before him at that moment, holding him at arm's length, her dear face shadowed, her dress dappled with moonlight through the syringa leaves . . . .

"Gee, I just can't bear to go!" said Jimmy at last; but after two or three false starts he finally reached the gate, turning, bareheaded, for a last long look at the slim figure outlined against the dimness of the porch.

Jimmy was surprised, as he neared home, to see a light in the library; his mother didn't usually wait up for him. Probably wanted to tell him again about putting on his heavy underwear as soon as it grew the least bit cold, and to get a doctor right away if he got a chill or anything; he would be leaving so early in the morning that there wouldn't be time for much of that. Jimmy chuckled as he thought of what he planned to do with those old "heavies" once he got away from maternal inspection of his laundry—but he was glad his mother was up. Such happiness as his had to be shared, and what double happiness to share it with his mother! How glad she would be for him, that he had this to take with him on the morrow. How she would love Barbara! Gee! Wasn't he the lucky fellow to have such a girl, and such a mother!

He sprang lightly upon the porch, scorning the two intervening steps; swung wide the library door; strode to his mother's chair, pulling her out



of it to hug her; and—"Mother!" he cried, huskily, "Oh, Mother!"

But it wasn't flannels this time, nor even overcoats and socks. All the evening, in fact for several weeks, Mrs. Landridge had been nerving herself for a serious talk with her son, and now it could be put off no longer; James *must* be spoken to about this girl matter. The old childish friendship with that pretty Barbara Thair was growing into a new intimacy, the seriousness of which she was unable to estimate, but which filled her with uneasiness, nevertheless. Earnestly, prayerfully even, she had debated the wisdom of letting matters take their course; an attachment in Red Haven might prove an anchor to keep James from sailing away in the wake of some equally attractive young person totally unknown to James' mother. On the other hand, this potential young person was not necessarily a wholly undesirable young person, and a "good" marriage did mean so much to a professional man! No, on the whole it would be as well to dispense with the anchor, Mrs. Landridge thought, and at the same time to take the opportunity of warning James off the matrimonial shoals in whatever quarter. Like Barbara? Why, certainly she liked Barbara; Barbara was a very nice girl indeed, and her family connections unexceptionable; no money, of course, but then—well, anyway, for the present at least, an engagement was not to be thought of. Surely James could see that. They were too young, his future was by no means assured. He *must not* entangle himself in a sentimental alliance which would take time and attention from his work and so hamper him at the very outset of his career!

This, and considerably more, she set forth eloquently and persuasively to the flushed, eager and rather breathless boy who came to her with his heart in his eyes, to tell her how it was with Barbara and himself. It was all very sensible and reasonable, Jimmy had to admit; but who wanted to be sensible or reasonable when there was love in the world, and soft young eyes and young lips upturned to his in the moonlight!

So Jimmy stormed and his mother argued. Stubbornly he refused to break with Barbara. Mrs. Landridge reminded him that until his twenty-first birthday, still two years distant, he would not be his own master, nor that of the legacy left by his father, but must live and pursue his studies upon her bounty. Ah, but that was quite the wrong tack to take with Jimmy, as she speedily realized. His face was white enough now, and his eyes hard, as he tried to tell her that, darn it, he didn't want anyone's "bounty." He'd get himself a job; other fellows did. He'd work like a dog, work anywhere, at anything, for years 'n' years, if he had to, for Barbara. *That's* what she was to him! College could go hang! He was a *man*, if he wasn't twenty-one, and Barbara was his girl. Nothing could change that—Barbara was *his girl*!

The thought, so poignantly sweet, overcame for the moment his anger and bitterness of heart; his mother, quick to take advantage of the gentler mood, patted the couch beside her, invitingly. "Come, James; let's stop wrangling and talk it over sensibly," she urged.

But Jimmy continued to stalk from window to fireplace and back again, finally coming to a halt beside the mantel-shelf, his head bowed miserably

upon folded arms, his face half hidden. "Just what is it—that you want me—to do, Mother?" came at last in muffled tones.

"Only to be reasonable, James dear, and fair to the girl."

Jimmy looked up quickly. "What do you mean, 'fair to the girl'?" he demanded.

"But can't you see, boy? Don't you realize that it will be five or six years at the very least, before you can ask any girl to marry you—before you can hope to support a wife and a possible family? And even if Barbara is willing to wait so long for you, is it quite fair to ask her to? You know how it is—an engaged girl can't go about much with other men and—well, it might be rather stupid for Barbara, don't you think?"

Mrs. Landridge had hit upon the one argument that could possibly have moved Jimmy. His attentive face encouraged her to proceed.

"You really owe it to her, James—a chance to meet other men, to form new friendships, if only to prove her love for you. How else can she be sure it's *you* she's in love with—"

Jimmy laughed shortly. "Well, who, then?" with savage disregard for the niceties of English speech.

"Why, no one, dear; it's just that sometimes, when one is young—one falls in love with love, and thinks—"

Jimmy laughed again, but without mirth. In love with love, he and Barbara! Huh! If it felt like that to be in love with love, what must it be to love a real woman? . . . He wondered, curiously, about his mother, and the father he could but dimly remember; had they ever—cared—like this? And if they had, could his mother



have forgotten? Could anyone *ever* forget? . . . . His mother was still talking—Gosh! What a lot of words spilled around, just for nothing at all! Did she really believe he was going to give up Barbara *ever*?

“—If she really cares, it won't make any difference in the end; and if she doesn't, you both want to know it before it's too late. You've been together ever since you were children; she's never *seen* anyone else, any more than you have; can't you see it's the kindest thing for her, as well as the wisest for you—just to—er—to drop it, you know, for the present?”

Well there! Nobody could say that Mrs. Landridge had shirked her plain duty in the matter, however hard it was to do!

“But, Mother!” objected Jimmy, “I *can't* just ‘drop it,’ as you say. After—tonight”—there was a queer little catch in his voice—“if I did that I'd be—just a rotten cad; what else could Barbara think? Mother—I couldn't bear that!” Down went his head again, miserably, as before.

“But I'm sure—Barbara is so fine, so sensible—if you put it to her in the right way—”

“But, Mother, I'll have no chance to see her!”

“Write, then. Do it tonight. And, James, I want to see it—what you write—before you send it.”

Jimmy hesitated. A fellow might write things to his girl that he wouldn't want even his mother to read!

“I know it isn't going to be easy to write such a letter,” Mrs. Landridge went on; “but life brings many hard tasks—it wasn't easy for me to give up my plans for you—the singing, I mean. I can't help believing that you would have suc-

ceeded, after all. But I did give it up; and I haven't made it hard, have I, for you to take up this other work you've set your heart on?"

"You've been a brick, Mother; you know I realize that and appreciate it with all my heart!"

"I'm sure of it, dear, so that's all right; I want you to do the work you'll be happiest in, of course. But one thing you *must* do: you must succeed! I wanted you to be a great singer, you know; but if you're going to be an—an architect"—to this day Mrs. Landridge was unable to give the word full dignity of utterance, but spoke it half apologetically—"an architect instead, then at least you must be a *great* architect. I do believe the one thing in the world that I utterly despise is failure! A man fails usually because he's lazy or stupid, or has bad habits or a bad disposition; though to hear him tell it, it's always his everlasting bad luck, or his family, and he never had a chance anyhow. Do, for goodness' sake, keep out of *that* class, James!"

Jimmy replied, dutifully, that he'd try; but his mother deemed it advisable to be rather more explicit, and spoke again of the stupidity of wasting time and opportunity on a love affair which couldn't possibly be consummated for years and years—to say nothing of Barbara's side of it!

"And about the letter, my dear, and the reason I must see it—" she finished briskly, "I merely want to make sure it sets you free to do your work, without hurting the little girl—er—unnecessarily. It will take tact to write that letter, James—tact and frankness—"

"Well—" The slow, toneless monosyllable held defeat, surrender, and utter weariness. Jimmy went half way to the door, then came back to kiss

his mother good-night. Usually he took the stairs three at a bound, but tonight he ascended slowly, heavily, like an old man; all the eager, vibrant youth seemed to be gone out of him—his spirit was as leaden as his feet.

Ah, well, never mind; youth's sorrows are short-lived; this boy-love was but boy-love after all, and the present hurt would be more than compensated by the future gain. Thus Jimmy's mother, quieting the half-doubts that began to stir uneasily beneath her sureness. Oh, it would be all right, of course! Just now the boy was sorely troubled; that was natural, but time would give him a better perspective, and he would thank her in the end. Oh, assuredly it would be all right, bye and bye.

Jimmy's light burned far into the still hours. His waste-basket overflowed with the torn and crumpled by-products of his sorry task. But at last it was done, and he turned in for what was left of the night, tired as his vigorous young body never had been tired before, wholly exhausted by his gamut of unaccustomed emotions. Straightway he fell into such depths of slumber that even the violent clamor of his alarm clock, an hour or so later, failed to bring him to the surface.

Waking tardily, what with his own hasty preparations for departure and his mother's hurry and preoccupation, there was no time for more than a word as Jimmy put into her hand the closely written pages. "You see that she gets it, if it's all right, Mother," he said, flushing with embarrassment. His mother assented, relieved that last night's storm, apparently, had quite blown over.



She had a heartache of her own to attend to after he was gone, the age-old heartache of the mothers of men as their sons go out from the home nest to live life as they find it, or make it. Chicago she knew by statistics to be a very great city, and by repute to be a very wicked one. Much might there befall a young man far from home and its influences. There would be experiences, temptations, perhaps—yes, it was long before Mrs. Landridge felt equal to the reading of Jimmy's renunciation, and it was with a heavy heart that she turned to it at last. If only he had succeeded in making his meaning clear! . . . She found that he had, beyond a doubt! Though it wasn't precisely his mother's meaning, after all!

In halting, awkward phrases, showing only too plainly his pain and disappointment, Jimmy had poured out his whole boyish heart, passionately, imploringly, to the girl he loved. He revelled in the delicious sadness of young heartbreak. He explained at length his mother's views, begging Barbara to understand and to forgive.

"Mother was fine about letting me do the work I like, and giving up the music and all and so if she thinks we are too young to be engaged and wait so long, it seems like I had to give in to her about it. You and I know it can't make any real difference with us. Nothing can do that, dear, as long as you're my girl, like you said. Mother thinks I ought to do as she wants anyway till I'm twenty-one, and not see each other much or write, as that would take my mind from my work. And she says you ought to have a chance to get acquainted with other fellows so we wouldn't be finding out after it was too late that you liked somebody else better. But I'm not worried about

that, because you said you were my girl; so whatever you do in that line will be O. K. with me, absolutely. Of course, I want you to have a good time, and if I was such a suspicious fool that I couldn't trust a girl like you, that I've known and loved all my life, I wouldn't deserve to have you."

Well, so far, so good. A boy's letter to his girl. A trifle more fervent than was absolutely necessary, perhaps, but one had to make some allowance for James' state of mind. Mrs. Landridge turned a page. Why! What in the world! . . . The rest of the letter was as though written by another hand, conceived by another brain, rooted in another heart. It was as if Jimmy, nineteen, half boy and half man, had begun the letter as a boy, and under stress of his emotion, had grown to full manhood in the writing of it. A man's letter, now, to the woman he loved!

"—Oh, my Barbara girl, how can I get through these two years till I am twenty-one, without the sight of you or the touch of you, after what we learned tonight! . . . Darling, did *you* know love was like that? . . . I shall try to see you at Christmas. I haven't actually promised not to see you at all, but even if I should I don't suppose I can say the things I want to. But I'll save them all up, sweetheart; and right here and now I'm making a date with you for the third of October, two years from now, my 21st birthday, and then I'll say them all and a thousand more, if you will listen, dear." . . . He wanted her to go about and have a good time while he was away, not to mope or worry, but be happy always. She must not consider herself bound beyond her inclination; as for himself, he would never cease to

think of her and love her; he was hers, body and soul, absolutely, unalterably—

You can see for yourself, *that* letter would never do! Here was James, supposed to disengage himself gently but definitely from the bonds woven of youth and moonlight, but instead chaining himself anew, tightening his fetters with dreadful irrevokableness. No, clearly it wouldn't do at all. He would have to write another and much, much less ardent one. Mrs. Landridge would tell him so, very positively, when she wrote. Oh, dear, what a nuisance! She had supposed that matter settled. Oh, *dear!* And until she heard from him she could do nothing—

Jimmy's first communication was the time-honored one of boys just gone away to college; a postcard with scribbled pencilling, thus: "Dear Mother, arrived safe, will write more when I get settled some place. I think I shall need some more money soon. Your son, J. W. L." No date, no address. Nothing to do but wait a while longer.

At the end of an uneasy week came a second hasty note from Jimmy, imploring her to send on in a hurry certain forgotten articles, which she answered with one almost as hurried, explaining that his tan shoes were certainly in his trunk, for she had packed them herself; and the coat to his brown suit—didn't he remember? He had taken it to the tailor's to have the collar altered; it wasn't finished, she had ascertained, but the man promised to send it next week. And Jimmy would have to buy himself a new tennis racket, because she had found his where he had left it as a prop under the attic window, and it had rained and the racket was warped out of shape, to say nothing



of the guest-room ceiling all stained—such a mess! How *could* he be so careless?

Reference to the Letter didn't seem to fit in, altogether, with these mundane matters; and Jimmy's mother decided to let it go till next time. But when the boy's next letter arrived, full of contrition about the guest-room ceiling and her bother over the coat; and yes, she was right about the shoes—she was down with "one of her headaches," and wrote but briefly in reply. Then came Cousin Camilla Winslow up from Charleston for a visit, and Mrs. Landridge must entertain her fittingly. She gave a luncheon and an afternoon of progressive whist, and several times took Cousin Camilla up to the city in order to show her Grace Church and Fifth Avenue, and to do the museums, both Art and Natural History; to gasp at the wonders of Tiffany's and browse among the new books at Brentano's, to lunch modestly at the new Waldorf-Astoria, to shop at Vantine's and in the big Twenty-third Street stores, to see some of the new plays and even vaudeville; for Cousin Camilla, though older than Mrs. Landridge, was frivolous that way. . . . Cousin Camilla stayed three weeks, and had a perfectly wonderful time!

And still the Letter lay hidden in Esther Landridge's desk, at intervals prodding her conscience, but less insistently as the days went by; till at last she came to believe that the matter wasn't so very pressing after all. Why not wait until the holidays and talk it over with James then? It would be so much more satisfactory than writing, and the interval would give opportunity for calming reflection—on his part. She, of course, was always calm.

If she had moments of wondering how James was going to take it, she smothered the thought. Christmas was two whole months away, and Mrs. Landridge didn't believe in crossing bridges at that distance. Almost anything could happen in two months. Perhaps she might not have to mention it to him at all, till time had turned his boyish fancy in some other direction; better still, in other directions—that comforting safety which to mothers of marriageable sons, lies in very numbers. Doubtless it was all for the best; James would thank her when he came to his senses; the very way to break off a troublesome affair was to let it wear off; better a few months of unhappiness now than a lifetime of disillusionment, mediocrity and regret. They'd get over it, and the sea is full of fish. Having thus smoothed away the joint troubles of James and his Barbara, Mrs. Landridge felt much better, very much better indeed.

Out of a lifetime of experiences, it is curious to note which ones are remembered and cherished, and which, of equal importance or unimportance, will sink into the oblivion of the years; how one man will count his achievements, another his failures; how this woman will string a rosary of friends, of lovers or of happy days, while that one accumulates a mental scrapbook of death notices and disasters. Esther Landridge could have described her wedding dress to the last inch of satin and lace, but she had forgotten the very name of the seamstress who made it; she didn't remember exactly what Homer had said when he proposed, but she *did* remember what a time they had getting the engagement ring altered to fit, and how in consequence she hadn't much more than a week in which to wear it, before the wedding; she could

not recall a word of Mr. Seabrooke's comforting utterances after Homer's funeral, but she knew how many carriages there were and who had sent flowers; she remembered that Senator Harris' son once asked her hand in marriage, but had the very dimmest recollection of the fourth assistant bookkeeper in the First National Bank who had aspired to the same high honor. And she had forgotten, utterly and entirely, a certain odd little feeling of warmth about her girlish heart, which Homer Landridge alone could evoke. As she remembered it, she had preferred him to Frank Harris because he was better looking—so very tall and distinguished, and because all the young ladies of her set would have given their ears to be in her shoes when he came a-wooing. She had loved him, of course, comfortably and sedately; he had been so kind always, and so considerate. But of Jimmy's passionate yearning tenderness towards his girl-love, of the rapturous delirium of that first embrace, and the total nothingness of all else in the world beside, she had neither knowledge nor understanding.

Sheltered by circumstance, Esther Landridge had lived much on the surface; her love for her son was the deepest emotion she had ever known, and that was so intertwined with her pride in and ambition for him that her impulses were sometimes hard to classify. She did not intend to do a mean nor dishonorable thing. She did not want to hurt Barbara Ann nor cause her son unhappiness. She honestly believed that this was a simple case of puppy-love, a boy-and-girl attachment over which both would laugh in years to come, rejoicing in their mutual escape. . . . Mrs. Landridge never *did* get around to talk to James about that letter, after all!



## XII

“What! No letter from Jim yet, Toodles?” quizzed Uncle Ben in mock concern, about a week after Jimmy’s departure.

A week didn’t really seem a very long time to Uncle Ben, but Barbara answered with a seriousness that made him look sharply at her from beneath his shaggy brows, and to pucker his mouth for a whistle and then not whistle after all. All that week Barbara had been, as it were, among them but not of them. Occasionally she came down from the rosy heights whereon she dwelt, and affectionately anxious to make amends for previous neglect, proceeded to tangle the threads of Aunt Cindy’s housekeeping till that long-suffering lady was in despair, and good-naturedly shooed the blunderer out of the kitchen and finally out of the house.

Barbara then took refuge in the summer-house, where none might see and wonder at her, kneeling there on the soft moss, her cheek pressed against the old wooden bench where a boyish jack-knife had twined a J and an L, a B and a T with fantastic art. She closed her eyes, the better to recall the look in Jimmy’s as he said that last good-night; she clasped her hands tightly, seeming to feel Jimmy’s enclosing fingers about them; back she floated to her glorious mountaintop of joy—

“Dear me, dear me! A whole week, and no letter yet!” mused Uncle Ben at the supper table. And down came Barbara Ann with a crash. Why, Jimmy was to have written the very *minute* he

found a boarding place; sooner, if there should be any delay in getting a permanent address. At the latest, his letter should have reached her yesterday; there must have been something unforeseen. But tomorrow, surely!

"He won't write until he gets settled somewhere," she excused him to Uncle Ben. "Of course, he's going to be awfully busy for a while, getting started in college and all—"

And so it appeared, as the days grew into weeks and still not a word from the boy. Barbara, sorely puzzled, hardly knew whether to be hurt or angry. Jimmy might have written—letters had been known to go astray—but surely he would have written again when he found she didn't answer. She could not write to him, having no address; and she *couldn't* ask anyone for it—certainly not Mrs. Landridge, nor Mr. Nichols, nor even Amory. She couldn't have *anyone* know that Jimmy wasn't writing to her. Even though by some subterfuge she obtained his address Barbara wasn't at all sure that she wanted to use it, now. Jimmy had promised to write; *why hadn't he?* What had happened? What had she done to anger him, what that he could have misunderstood?

For the thousandth time she went over in her mind every word, every slightest incident of their last evening together. She thrilled again to the memory of his kisses, felt once more the rapture of love confessed, saw again his adoring face as he stood at the gate in the moonlight. No, indeed, Jimmy had *not* been angry with her then! It couldn't be—oh, it could *not* be, that he hadn't meant it after all! Jimmy wouldn't do that, her Jimmy, the best pal a girl ever had. Even if he

didn't really *care*, he never would hurt her like that!

Some imp of perversity flashed before her a remembered incident of the previous winter. She had been skating late one afternoon, and intent upon one last darting flight ere the early winter twilight should force her to hurry home, she had outstripped the others and was skimming over the ice near the cove where the boys used to swim in summer, when she felt the loosening of a skate. Turning abruptly to the shore, she had almost collided with a couple standing in the shelter of the point. They were "Piggy" Wilson and one of the Lorimer girls, and he was "kissing the face off her," as Barbara noted with sharp distaste. With a confused apology she hurried back around the point to adjust the refractory skate, and might have forgotten the incident had not "Piggy" approached her the following day, asking her to skate with him. To her somewhat curt refusal he had rejoined, "Aw, say, Barb'ra, you needn't have it in for me—about yesterday, you know; I was just practicin'!"

Oh, it was absurd, it was monstrous, to believe that of Jimmy. Barbara didn't, of course; yet the thought stuck—

So she worried and fretted in her little pink-and-white room, and came forth to hold her head higher than ever. No one should know that anything had gone amiss in her scheme of happiness! Most of all she was glad, *glad* that she hadn't told anyone yet, not even Aunt Cindy, about Jimmy and herself.

But Aunt Cindy, at least, wasn't so easily hoodwinked. She knew Barbara's bright eyes never dimmed with tears without a reason; and Uncle



Ben, too, saw that the child was troubled. They talked of it one night in their room.

"If that young jackanapes has been making a fool of our baby—" growled Uncle Ben. Aunt Cindy didn't think so. "It was all right until he went away, and we know he hasn't written. *Something's* happened, and it's *my* opinion it's that fine-lady mother of his!" Aunt Cindy's scorn of Mrs. Landridge and her ways dated from the children's crabbing days, and had not diminished perceptibly since.

"Fine lady, your grandmother!" retorted Uncle Ben with more force than gallantry. "But, Cindy, how could she have contrived to turn the boy against Barbara, even if she'd wanted to? And why the Sam Hill should she want to, anyway? That's what I can't see, for the life of me!"

In truth there appeared little enough reason for such a belief, for Mrs. Landridge seemed of late to go quite out of her way to be nice to them all, while her manner toward Barbara was almost affectionate. Barbara was pleased and vaguely comforted, as, perhaps, the older woman meant her to be. Barbara wanted Jimmy's mother to like her, irrespective of the fact that Jimmy himself apparently didn't, any more; but not a step would she go toward the one nor the other. If she were to meet Jimmy tomorrow, she wouldn't so much as ask him why he hadn't written, though her heart broke with wanting to know; and you'd just better believe she wasn't going to do any *gushing* over Jimmy's mother, the way Stella Martine did, for instance. Barbara was proud. Well, yes, a *little* bit stubborn, perhaps; but she knew, now, whether to be angry or hurt. She was both, and in no slight degree. So she sought no word of Jimmy,

and in place of "gushing over" his mother, leaned rather the other way, letting Mrs. Landridge make the advances, and responding not too eagerly.

In fact Barbara, obeying a certain instinct of reserve, had ever held serenely aloof from Jimmy's home life. Even when he was at home she rarely went there, never unless there was a crowd, though Jimmy teased her endlessly to "c'mon up and see Mom." Stella, on the other hand, "liking" Jimmy but finding him unresponsive, was inclined to "take it out on" his mother; more than ever now that he was away.

A clinging vine was Stella, with a perennial retinue of young men to fetch and carry, to kill that horrible spider—ugh!—and to go walking with her and assure her that there couldn't possibly be any snakes. Girls bored her, except those with attractive male relatives; and when she was forced to endure their society for a season, her eyes would take on a certain far-away look that the approach of masculinity alone could banish. At dances she was all sparkle, and did coy things with her fan; she studied the tastes of her admirers, and was daring, provocative, alluring, or sweet, demure and domestic, according to requirements, and most of "the fellows" were strongly "for" her—for a time. A few there were whom she never had been able to reach; perhaps as Ted Rossiter said, she mixed her signals. Ted was one of them, and Jimmy another, and Amory Booth. And of them all, the ones who came at her call and the ones who didn't, she liked Jimmy best.

Not an especially pretty girl—her face was too weak, her features too indeterminate for real

beauty—she passed as such, in general; for she was of that effervescent type which “lights up” well, especially in the evening and in masculine society. Stella in a bathing suit, swimming with a crowd of girls, was downright homely!

Except her hands. Stella's hands were beautiful in any company, and having rather more than an inkling of the fact, she made the most of them. Gloves she never wore; even a muff, to Stella, meant not warmth so much as opportunity for graceful gesturings with a background of rich, dark fur. Then, when beauty alone proved insufficient protection from icy blasts, what more natural than to warm their loveliness discreetly between ardent masculine palms?

Generally speaking, of course. Just once she tried it on Jimmy. “Huh! Cold? Should think they would be! Whyn't you put 'em in your muff, then, 'stead of wavin' 'em in the air like a ninny?”

Yes, Stella's hands were undeniably beautiful; so Barbara didn't attempt to deny it, but disliked them, beauty and all—their smooth slimness, that curious suggestion of drooping weakly at the wrists. Hands, in fact, were a sort of mild obsession with Barbara. They fascinated her as a child, and as she grew older she began, half consciously, to associate certain kinds of hands with certain kinds of people. There were Aunt Cindy's, small and plump, yet with an effect of strength and capability. Jimmy had fine hands, too; large and shapely and flexible, without a trace of fat, yet not raw-boned and ugly; Barbara loved to watch the smooth play of the muscles beneath the skin. Barbara's own hands were slender, but strong and never very white; she herself thought them far from handsome, yet every line and ges-



ture spoke of both delicacy and force, of sincerity and a generous heart.

Barbara never had been quite sure whether Stella's pretty helplessness was a matter of personality or of pose; but she had to admit that many people found it attractive. Even Mrs. Landridge, apparently, for Stella was there a great deal. It seemed to Barbara, on the rare occasions when she could bring herself to accept one of Mrs. Landridge's frequent invitations, that Stella was always there, drooping prettily about with an air of demure proprietorship that was maddening. It filled Barbara with a kind of fury to see the other so much at home in that house, handling familiarly, almost caressingly, things that were Jimmy's.

Even without Stella's presence, it was hard enough for Barbara to go to Jimmy's house, hard to keep up her gallant pretense of happiness before Jimmy's mother, in the rooms where he had lived, the very furniture instinct with his presence—his picture on the desk, his books, the chair he liked, his place at table. Yet when she did go, she succeeded so well that Mrs. Landridge caught herself wondering whether, perhaps, James had broken his word and was writing to Barbara after all. But no, that would be most unlike James; he would be apt, rather, to serve candid and conspicuous notice of any intended disobedience. Of course, there was the chance that Barbara might write to him, demanding explanations; had already done so, perhaps, though in that case James would certainly have passed the demand on to his mother; so in the end she concluded that the girl didn't really care, after all.

Barbara certainly gave no intimation to any of

her friends that all was not serene between herself and Jimmy. To the frequent, "Well, Barbara, what do you hear from Jim?" she would make careless answer, "Oh, he's too busy to write much"; replying gaily to the badinage of irrepressible youth, "Sure, I get one every day; two or three of 'em, some days!"

Jimmy, meanwhile, between office and university was learning many things about hard work that heretofore had been largely hearsay; but he was enjoying it mightily. And this in face of the fact that life was an arid waste, uncheered by written words of love and hope and encouragement from the one girl who really counted in the feminine population of the world.

He met girls a-plenty, for Jimmy was the sort of young fellow that just naturally gets taken home and introduced to the family; nice girls, too, in their way, and willing to do their little best in the way of needed cheering-up. His chief invited him to dinner, and the Harper twins, each a soulful sixteen, greatly admired his air of courteous detachment, and told each other that he was by far the most *in*-trusting man they had ever met; and had Leo noticed what perfect pools of sadness his eyes were; and didn't Theo believe he had at some time had some awf'ly heart-shattering experience, the scars of which he was carrying to the grave?

Both Leo and Theo—Leonora, you see, and Theodora—thought they ought to do what they could to lighten his burden of grief; so what with one thing and another, Jimmy became quite cheerful after a time, and had to remind himself, with bitterness, that he was a man tortured by unjust

separation from the woman he loved. Then he would go about with beetling brows and heavy mein, till he brought down upon himself the good-natured joshing of the fellows at the house—sultry maledictions on the son-of-a-gun who, presumably, had put salt in Jimmy's morning coffee; tearful commiseration because of a belief that his girl had presented him with an object referred to as an icy eyebrow; rude adjurations to g'wan back upstairs and put on his other face; and other scintillating remarks of like nature—and Jimmy's scowl would be utterly lost in the ensuing rough-house. Try as he might, he couldn't keep a doleful expression long in place on that frank and friendly face of his; it was forever slipping and showing the cheerful grin beneath.

After all, things weren't so bad. He had the remembrance of his letter to Barbara to help him over the hard places; and what a comfort it was to know that she understood, and would keep faith with him through years of silence and separation, if need be! Never for an instant did he doubt that. Nor, after the first rebellious outburst, did he seriously question his mother's wisdom; only it did seem as if a letter now and then—oh, well, maybe she was right, at that; he supposed if he did have one he'd spend hours mooning over it, as she had said, and, of course, he couldn't afford that. Nothing must delay him on his march to success; not even love itself, for love was his goal, the price of his mightiest effort; love—and Barbara—

Ah, but there were some hard places to get over, days and nights when he had to fight homesickness and a desperate longing for "his girl." More and more he lived in the thought of the approach-



ing holidays, planning what he should say to Barbara when they met, wondering whether one little kiss, accidental-like, would do real violence to his promise, and half resolving to take it anyhow if he got the chance, and settle the ethics of the case afterward. . . . And then in the midst of all his happy planning came a letter from his mother, saying that she had decided to spend Christmas in Chicago with him!

Jimmy's hopes flattened like a child's toy balloon, heavily sat upon by some large, careless grown-up. Despair charged down upon him, rode him from his classes to the office and from the office to his room, sat all night upon his chest, erased every sign of his familiar grin—permanently, it was feared by Leo and Theo, fairly aching with sympathy. Gee, it was tough! He'd played fair, and *now* what? Of course, his mother hadn't promised, but Jimmy had been hoping she might relent, just a little, by Christmas time. Merely to *see* Barbara would be *something*! How could he, how *could* he wait until far-off June for the sight of his girl, the hoped-for whispered word that should renew their ecstasy and fortify them for another eternity of separation!

Barbara's dominant feeling was one almost of relief, when Mrs. Landridge told her of their changed plans. She managed a very creditable smile, and a cordial, "oh, won't that be jolly for you both!" and when asked whether she wished to send any message to James, she replied, "oh, no, thank you, except that I hope he likes his work and is getting on fine!"

"Well, one sure thing," thought James' mother, "there's no heartbreak here!" A matter quite

beyond her ken was Barbara's stubborn pride, which permitted no downcast face to point the way to her downcast heart!

### XIII

Aunt Cindy was more discerning. With the approach of summer she saw Barbara grow so restless, so broodingly unhappy, that she was really worried. The child was thin and irritable, and most unlike herself in every way; had no appetite—and when within a week of Jimmy's expected return, she begged to go away; oh, anywhere, just for a change, sort of a vacation, you know—it was decided that she should accept the long-standing and oft-repeated invitation of the Hanchell relatives "up York State," to visit these cousins whom she never had seen.

Grandma's people, they were; Grandma's brother, Greatuncle 'Lias Hanchell, and his spinster daughter Savory; the children of Greatuncle 'Lihu and Greatuncle James, and of Greataunt Lavinia Beebe and Greataunt Margaret, who married a Loveland; and *their* children and children's children unto the third and fourth generation of Hanchell kin, whose ramifications soon proved too much for Barbara Ann, and she accepted without question Cousin Milly and Cousin Adelaide and Cousin Howard and Cousin George and Cousin this and Cousin that, as they were presented. It was a brand-new experience for Barbara Ann; the Ferrisses apparently had been much less prolific!

There was rejoicing in Littledale over the pretty young cousin from "Jersey." She was petted and passed about from Hanchell to Hanchell, to make a visit with that one and with this



one; and when she had gone around once and had begun to talk of returning home, they insisted on a second series of visits by way of farewell. It seemed to Barbara that in the course of the summer she was a guest in nearly every house in the village, and she readily understood why the place had been known as Hanchelltown before the railroad "went through," and painted "Littledale" in big white letters over the station door.

What delightful people they were, these York State relatives of hers! What unstinting hospitality was theirs! What cooks they were, the women! and what jolly chaps, the men! Barbara laughed, and ate, and laughed again, till she grew almost fat, and began to fear that she daren't stay any longer lest she get to be as fat as Cousin Rufus Beebe, the jolliest of them all, and his wife 'Liza, the best cook—by a very narrow margin! Ah! Cousin 'Liza's butternut cake, three stories high, with a very mansard roof of icing—food for the gods! But then there was Cousin Emily's strawberry shortcake; not, let me tell you, one of these affairs of sponge cake, and whipped cream, with a lonely berry or two, but great rounds of flaky shortbread, split and buttered and piled one upon another, with *slathers* of berries swimming in their own juice! And Aunt Harriet's graham "gems," all crusty and piping hot from the "gem irons" that had been in the family for generations; not common round ones like Aunt Cindy's, but shaped like little hollow cylinders split in two lengthwise. And there was Cousin Marcia's—but pshaw! what's the use? They have two bakeries in Littledale now, and a delicatessen counter in the meat market!

It was distinctly soothing to Barbara's out-

raged pride to find that *somebody* liked her, even though Jimmy didn't, any more; and not all the somebodies who did, and didn't care who knew it, were Hanchells; indeed no! There was young Doctor MacKenzie, who that very June had come straight from his interneship at St. Mark's, in New York, to assist his father, *old* Doctor MacKenzie, with the country practice which his seventy years were beginning to find a little too strenuous. Young Doctor MacKenzie was homesick for "the Big Town"—which he never had seen till he was twenty! But Littledale *was* a slow place, after six years in New York; and while Barbara herself wasn't in the least homesick, she was willing to do what she could to console one who was. The young doctor soon cheered up amazingly, and began to talk of settling permanently in Littledale; after all, a doctor in a little town had opportunities for service that his city brother couldn't have; he became a vital part of the community life—why, a country practice could be no end of a big thing!

All this young Doctor MacKenzie discovered at about the same time that it occurred to him that Barbara's presence beside him on the high seat of his smart dog-cart, as he made his rounds, lent to the day an added glory, and caused the very sun to shine more brightly, and the birds to carol more joyously in his ears.

Barbara appreciated the distinction conferred upon her; but so great was her fear of the tall, lively sorrel he drove, that she chose to forego the pleasure when she decently could. For to Barbara Ann, water-wise, fearing nothing propelled by fin or oar or sail, a horse was an outlandish beast altogether outside her experience, and sure

to do alarming and incomprehensible things if left in her charge, as when the doctor was making a professional call. So ashamed was she of this fear, however, that she would scarcely have admitted it under torture, but each time accepted the reins with outward nonchalance and inward quaking, trying to look as if she and "Bobby Irish" were on the friendliest of terms; but after two or three nerve-wrecking sessions, devoted by Bobby to clamping his tail over the reins, trying to turn around in the shafts, and eating the hollyhocks in the patient's dooryard, and by Barbara to a frantic endeavor to frustrate these and Bobby's many other knavish tricks, she had a happy thought: four-leaved clovers! Thereafter, at each stop she insisted on hunting them by the roadside; which necessitated tying the troublesome quadruped to hitching post or convenient tree, at which he nibbled contentedly enough while Barbara pursued her search. The first week netted her forty-one specimens; but that was of little moment compared to the immeasurable relief she felt, and freedom from equine eccentricities.

There was one day when the young doctor called her from her task to help him apply splints and bandages to a boy's broken leg. Her willing fingers seemed slow and clumsy beside his deft sureness, but she glowed with his praise when it was done. Another time he asked her if she would come in and make toast and egg-nog for his patient, an irascible old lady whose first intelligible speech, following a slight paralysis, had been a venomous "Git outa here!" addressed to her nurse. She was still muttering something that sounded like "Twenny dolls a week! Twenny dolls a week!" when Barbara entered, but inter-



rupted her plaint to hurl maledictions at this new intruder. Barbara, however, reassured by an off-side wink from the doctor, went ahead, glad to her very toes that Aunt Cindy had taught her to cook! And what is more, she coaxed the old lady to sip the egg-nog and nibble the toast; and told her one of Uncle Ben's funny stories, while the old lady kept on sipping and nibbling, without meaning to, till she had sipped and nibbled them all up!

Driving home, young Doctor MacKenzie asked Barbara why she didn't take up nursing. Barbara didn't know—had never thought about it, she said; but mentally she added, "Well, I don't know—if Jimmy—"

They talked of it, young Doctor MacKenzie enthusiastic, Barbara increasingly interested; but the brilliant young idea was destined to die a-bornin'. Nurses, Barbara decided, must be made of stuff more heroic than mere willingness and a broken heart!

It was as they drove slowly toward the village one afternoon, the day's routine of calls despatched earlier than usual. Old Doctor MacKenzie took care of the office calls and village cases, and young Doctor MacKenzie was in no hurry; for all about him was a glorious summer day, and beside him a glorious girl. Life was sweet, life was joyous. Tomorrow, if it liked, life might be real, might be earnest; but today—

"Beats the bugs" observed young Doctor MacKenzie, pointing lazily with the whip, "how one of these dagoes will take a few acres that two or three generations of Yankee farmers have all but starved on, and make it look like that! That's the old Medway place; Zenas Medway—he was

the last of 'em—he died over at the county farm, along in the spring.”

The field he indicated spread its acre or so beside the road, a square of brown mathematically polka-dotted with the tender green of young cabbages. Not a weed could be seen; the plants themselves looked as though each had been trimmed and molded into the exact similitude of all the rest; no ragged leaves, no sprawling, lopsided heads, no crippled stalks.

“I’ll bet there isn’t a cabbage-worm in the whole patch!” he went on; “and when that fellow—name’s Peperini or something like that—harvests his crop, he’ll get as much again as the man on the next place. And yet we want to ‘Americanize’ ‘em!”

Barbara thought it likely that the late remnant of the Medway line had been rather less energetic than the esteemed Signor Peperini, who probably rose at dawn to groom his cabbage patch; and the doctor agreed: “Yep! There’s Tony now; the personification of energy, I’d say. Wonder if that’s his usual gait?”

They watched, curiously, the blue-overalled figure as it ran out of the yard and down the road toward them, stumbling in its ungainly boots, haste defeating speed. The man’s shouts reached them, incomprehensible; and when he came alongside, panting and gesticulating, his tongue fell over the hard English words into a splashing sea of Italian, of which one word, oft repeated, finally reached the physician’s consciousness. The word was “bambino.”

The insulted flanks of Bobby Irish responded with a burst of speed that all but catapulted Barbara from the cart. She clung frenziedly to the

seat as they careened into the Peperini dooryard; the reins were pushed into her hands; and ere she fairly realized that the doctor had entered the house, he was out again, without his coat, scribbling in a notebook as he came, and had taken Bobby by the head and turned him around.

"Drive," he commanded, "to Wharton's place—the store at the crossroads—and telephone Dad to get Mrs. Richards out here quick, and these things"—thrusting the scrap of paper into her hand. "Tell him it's Mrs. Peperini—convulsions. And drive," he concluded, "like all hell!"

He was halfway to the door before the dismayed "Oh!" had left her lips; calling back over his shoulder, "and get back here quick's ever you can! Here, Tony, get some more wood in here; bring some water; *hustle!*"

Drive! *Drive!* And how, in Heaven's name, *did* one drive? You pulled on the lines, to turn right and left; that much she knew. You said "whoa!" and "giddap!" Was there anything else? That *awful* horse—oh! She couldn't, she knew she couldn't! . . . Mrs. Peperini . . . convulsions . . .

"Giddap!" quavered Barbara Ann. And to her everlasting astonishment, Bobby Irish giddapped!

Long years afterward Barbara drove a high-powered motor car from Red Haven to Pasadena; seven weeks it took, including stops, but it was not so long as that mad journey from Peperini's to Wharton's place, less than a mile away. "Drive! Drive like *hell!*" . . . The high cart rocked and rolled behind the leaping feet of Bobby Irish. *Was* she driving him, or was he simply running away? Oh, dear Lord, don't let us meet a team or anything! *Please* don't let us!



. . . That ditch at the side of the road—ten feet deep it looked as the wheels skimmed its very edge—surely it hadn't been there when they drove out that afternoon!

Wharton's at last! Now, *whoa!* Sure enough, Bobby whoaed!

Barbara tumbled from her perch, while a lank gentleman of the Zenas Medway type shuffled forward to hold the horse, which seemed to have got a lot of soapsuds on itself, somehow or other. Barbara loved the lank gentleman. She loved him still more when she heard him call to another—his twin brother, possibly—on the store steps, "H-h-h-gosh! She m-musta d-d-d-druv like all h-he-he-hell!"

The trip back was shorter; about as far, say, as from Chicago to Denver. A shaking Tony, greenish white under his swarthinness, took the sudsy sorrel in charge, and Barbara went in; to report, she supposed, but found that she was mistaken. After all, it gave her rather a thrill to find that Doctor MacKenzie took her success so entirely for granted. He nodded toward a rough bench in the kitchen, where some rudimentary washing arrangements were laid out. "Scrub your hands and arms, *good*, and come in here; and hurry *up!*" he ordered. Barbara's gasp of horror was lost in the closing of the bedroom door!

"I won't! I won't! The *idea!*" she stormed at the dingy panels. . . . Merciful Heaven! What was that? . . . a sobbing moan, a wail, rising to a shriek of agony . . . Barbara turned toward the bench, rolling up her sleeves as she went!

The memory of that next half hour haunted Barbara Ann for years—a nightmare of dreadful

sights and sounds, with Doctor MacKenzie's incisive voice issuing orders in a tone far removed from the careful suavity of his cherished "bed-side manner"; issuing, *to her*, such orders as she never had thought to hear from *anyone*! She went scarlet with shame and rage. What would they all say—Aunt Cindy—and all the cousins—and Jimmy—if they knew? For that matter, how could she ever again face this—this *horrible* doctor, after *this*? She wouldn't! She'd never see him nor speak to him again, never! She would go home, right away, tomorrow! Why should she do this? She would leave the room this instant! Oh, would that nurse, that Richards woman, *never* come?

Nevertheless she stayed, and obeyed those preposterous commands, understanding at last that they two were no longer the man and the girl who had jogged so pleasantly along behind Bobby Irish, through the golden summer afternoon. Now he was the physician, whose case was going none too well; she, as Barbara Thair, simply didn't exist. She raged no more, but did her blundering best to help him.

At least she could obey. "Don't faint!" ordered Doctor MacKenzie, near the end of that awful half hour. And so she didn't, though she had wanted to, very much indeed!

Barbara didn't go home next day. The cousins wouldn't hear of it. So she went, instead, to make her promised visit at the old Hanchell homestead "out in the country," as they said in metropolitan Littledale.

And right there she received "the shock of her career," as she afterward wrote Aunt Cindy; for

being welcomed at the door by both Uncle 'Lias and his spinster daughter Savory—Aunt Savory they called her, though she wasn't anybody's aunt, really, but merely a first-cousin-once-removed—and ushered hospitably into the big, cool sitting-room, Barbara found another visitor there before her; which same was, of all people—Aunt Anna-meel!

Very much at home she looked, rocking comfortably in what Barbara at first took to be the identical Boston rocker of her childhood, and which really was equally ancient, equally shabby—its very twin, in fact. And strangely tired she looked, in spite of it, and not nearly so large as she used to seem to the little Barbara Ann. Why! She looked *old*! Why, Aunt Annameel *was* old!

Barbara hadn't seen Aunt Annameel in a long time. Aunt Cindy used to go to Hepzibah House with conscientious regularity, and Aunt Annameel was always invited to dinner on holidays, like Christmas and Thanksgiving; now and then Barbara herself had "run in" upon her, urged thereto, at times coerced, by kindly Aunt Cindy. Oh, yes, Barbara had *seen* Aunt Annameel fairly often, since that day so long ago when she had turned her back on the impossible conditions of Aunt Cindy's household regime, to breathe the more congenial, if slightly musty, atmosphere of Hepzibah House. But though Barbara had seen her, it had been with eyes that saw not. Aunt Annameel was queer, and one went to see her because one must, and got away again as soon as might be. And while there one talked incessantly, if one were wise; for any pause gave Aunt Anna-meel opportunity to pounce on one with a query as to what Second Timothy had to say on the sub-



ject, or to ask "and what do we read in Revelations, fourth chapter and ninth verse?"—questions which Barbara couldn't have answered, even in Sunday-school, if Miss Lawrence ever had asked them; which she probably wouldn't, at least not in that abrupt way, "not in a million years!" Barbara reflected.

And now Barbara had come to visit Uncle 'Lias and Aunt Savory at Hanchell Farm, and here was Aunt Annameel!

Barbara's greetings were cordial, though confused. *What* in the world—*where* had Aunt Annameel come from? And when and why? How did she happen to come 'way off up here all alone?

Aunt Annameel seemed rather to enjoy Barbara's bewilderment, and replied in leisurely fashion, that she had come from Red Haven and Hepzibah House last night, because the Lord had sent her. She was not alone, He had been with her all the way.

Later, she elaborated. Because in some respect she had failed in doing God's will, He had sent upon her this new disease, that they called La Grippy. She had fought it with the Word, but sin is ever stubborn, and at length, though she recovered, she found her physical strength had become even as her faith—insufficient unto her need. So that when Miss Mattie also came down with La Grippy, and after her Miss Sarah, Aunt Annameel had not been strong enough to care for them as they had done for her; they had to get a nurse.

But Aunt Annameel felt that she ought to go away till, by meditation and prayer, she should have regained her spiritual and physical strength. All one afternoon she had prayed over it, and

right after supper, hadn't Aunt Cindy come in, having but just heard of her illness; and she had chanced to mention that Barbara was spending the summer with the Hanchell relatives, up in York State.

And there, do you see, was the very answer to her prayer! She too would visit Ma's folks in York State! And so she had written Cousin Savory, here, that very night, and here she was! Praise the Lord!

Aunt Savory was somewhat embarrassed by these outspoken references to One whom she was wont to address much less familiarly, and then only at church or in the maidenly solitude of her own chamber. Aunt Savory was what is known as a "good Churchwoman," and never missed a service at the tiny Episcopal church in town, unless entirely snowed in by winter drifts. She would as soon have thought of going to bed without her high-necked and long-sleeved nightgown as of doing so without first reading the Collect, Epistle and Gospel for the day, with sundry portions of the Order for Evening Prayer. Aunt Annameel's casual manner of referring to the Deity was a distinct shock to Aunt Savory, and smacked of irreverence, if not of downright sacrilege.

Uncle 'Lias, who hadn't seen his niece since her childhood, stated to Aunt Savory, in private, his opinion that Aunt Annameel had "owls in her attic, sure's you live!"—but treated her with extraordinary politeness, as a dweller in an alien land. And Aunt Savory hid involuntary shudders, and strove to keep to everyday channels of speech; ably abetted by Barbara, who had the advantage of long familiarity with Aunt Anna-

meel's conversational rocks and shoals. Aunt Savory believed that there is good in all things, and conscientiously looking for it in her cousin Annameel, soon found a genuinely warm heart under the cloak of over-righteousness; while Aunt Annameel quickly guessed a nature as deeply religious as her own, though less articulate, and the two ultimately became excellent friends.

Barbara wondered, however, how it would be with the rest of the clan, when they should come to meet Aunt Annameel. And what would "the girls" think, and Dr. MacKenzie? Well, she would tell people that Aunt Annameel was "queer, but as good as gold, really." That in fact came to be the village estimate of this odd person, and her sayings were passed from one to another with huge enjoyment, long after her visit came to an end.

But to Barbara's amazement, young Doctor MacKenzie appeared to derive positive pleasure from Aunt Annameel's society, and sought it early and late, so that after all Hanchell Farm proved no sanctuary from the humiliating sight of him. Stranger still, Aunt Annameel liked him, too, though she protested that all his pills and potions were but so much poison, his theories poppycock, and the whole medical profession a misguided lot of fanatics, hidebound, wilfully blind to the wonderful truth that there can be no healing save through prayer. If folks would take proper care of their souls their bodies would take care of themselves, and all the doctors would have to seek another trade!

One day, surreptitiously summoned by a badly-frightened Aunt Savory, he found Aunt Annameel moaning, almost helpless with pain, having over-



indulged in green corn—then at the height of its season—and Aunt Annameel's teeth not being all that they once were. She was suffering so intensely that she could not resist his ministrations; but when his Sod. Bi-Carb. and Amm. Sp. Arom. brought quick relief, she gave the whole credit to the fervent prayers she had poured forth for a full hour prior to his arrival!

But in spite of Aunt Annameel, in spite, even, of young Doctor MacKenzie, Hanchell Farm proved a very garden of delight to Barbara Ann. Three hundred acres there were, hewn from virgin forest by certain ancestral Hanchells, obeying the then equivalent of "go west, young man!"—seeking in the wilderness of central New York for opportunity not to be found in the effete civilizations of Massachusetts and of Connecticut. The house itself, a rambling, weather worn structure of jostling uprights and "ells," had been built by some post-Revolutionary ancestor a full century ago, and occupied by a succession of Hanchells ever since. Here Grandma Ferriss (she was Sally Ann Hanchell, you remember) had lived as a girl, and many were the tales Greatuncle 'Lias had to tell of her youth and his own; how, of a Sunday evening, when he and his brothers would return from calling on certain young ladies of the neighborhood, they would be sure to find a string of saddled horses hitched to the fence palings, their riders pleasantly engaged within in the agreeable pastime of "sparking" the three pretty Hanchell girls.

"The prettiest girls in the county, my sisters were!" boasted old Mr. Hanchell with honest conviction. He told Barbara she hadn't the Hanchell

look; nor did she apparently "take after" the Ferrisses, either, what little he'd ever seen of 'em.

"I saw your mother once, when she was about your age," he said to Barbara one day. "She was a mighty pretty girl; yes, sir, a *mighty* pretty girl! I guess you favor your father's folks more—eh, Barb'ry!"

Barbara laughingly acknowledged that she had always been considered an unequivocal Thair, and Aunt Savory hastened to change the subject lest the child's feelings be hurt. Barbara thought it a huge joke, however; related it gleefully to all the second-cousins and cousins-further-removed, and likewise stored it up for the sure appreciation of Uncle Ben, at home.

Barbara's week at Hanchell Farm lengthened to a month, and then she hated to go. She had come to love sweet, gentle Aunt Savory, and had found in the old man a mine of anecdote, quaintly humorous, sometimes racy, but always interesting. She hated leaving the old house, too. Barren it might be as to exterior, but Barbara's eyes sparkled as she visioned Aunt Cindy's delight in the ancient dressers and wardrobes, the spinet brought from over the sea by the original New England Hanchell in sixteen-hundred-and-something, the spindle-legged chairs, and the shining pewter and brass that kept Aunt Savory and "Hitty," the middle-aged "hired girl," busily at work a great many hours each week. How dreadfully new and varnishy the dwellings of the village Hanchells, beside all this old-time mellowness! Why, many of them were built less than fifty years ago; and had "cozy corners" in the parlors, and wicker tea tables with souvenir spoons and a Japanese tea service that had to be dusted every week, and silk-

flounced "piano lamps," and a cylinder phonograph which implored shrilly, "oh, *spare* him, for I love him ten-derly!" when the Pinafore record was put on. Yes, indeed, they were quite up to date in Littledale; but Barbara liked the old farmhouse best.

And oh, the great elms in the dooryard, at whose age one could only guess! Uncle 'Lias said they had been there in his grandfather's day, and were quite sizable trees even then. . . . And rising behind the big barns, the wooded hill where once upon a time Uncle Sol had killed a b'ar! Uncle Sol was Uncle 'Lias' uncle; Grandma Ferriss', too, of course, which made him—let me see, what relation to Barbara Ann? Well, Aunt Savory knew, anyway; Aunt Savory knew the Hanchell family tree to its remotest twig, and was keen on heraldry and the Daughters of the American Revolution. It was from her that Barbara learned of the doughty deeds of one Eldad Hanchell at Bennington, and of Lieutenant Jonathan Barrick at Monmouth; and about the patriotism of Captain Enoch Hanchell of the Connecticut militia, who served throughout the war, was wounded in the leg so that he walked lame ever after, but who refused to apply for a pension on the ground that, what with his cider-brandy distillery doing so well, the struggling young nation needed the money more than he did! And how Barbara thrilled at it all, knowing these to have been of her own blood!

But Aunt Annameel was moved only to sigh, and shake her head. Vanity, all vanity! How much better to pin one's thoughts and desires to the things of the spirit and the life to come, for one could not hope to find salvation in the bloody



deeds of the past! Aunt Savory opened her mouth to reply, but shut it again without saying anything. What was the use?

Young Doctor MacKenzie's preoccupation with Aunt Annameel's "psycopathy" did not, of course, preclude a word with Barbara now and then. Several times he asked her how she liked Littledale, and was assured that she liked it very much indeed. Finally he said the rest of it. But whether it was her remembrance of that tone and manner which were not his bedside tone and manner, or whether she really didn't care for Littledale as a permanent residence, he didn't come again, to the intense disgust of Aunt Annameel, who said he had the making of a first-rate man in him, if only he could be made to see the fallacy of his belief in medicine for the healing of mankind.

However, even though Barbara didn't care to remain in Littledale as "young Mrs. Doctor MacKenzie," she might have stayed, less sonorously, as "Mrs. John Wells." John was the miller's son, and had been to Cornell; but he came near to spoiling Barbara's visit, for he was big and blond and reminded her of Jimmy.

Not that she needed reminders. Jimmy dwelt ever in her thought, and she was obliged to bury him beneath many layers of gayety lest he bob up and disgrace her with tears of loneliness and longing. So she entered with zest into all that was offered for her entertainment, and went home much improved in looks and spirits, Aunt Cinda thought.

Jimmy, it seemed, hadn't been near the house in her absence, but had joined a crowd of fellows from the old choir and gone into camp at Manas-

quan; and now, in October, had long been back at his work.

The truth was that he had come home in June, tingling with anticipation, only to find his bird flown, and flown so recently as to leave no doubt of her intention. "Hang it all!" he stormed within himself, "she needn't have taken it so darned literally!" Evidently she meant him to keep the letter of his promise to his mother, as well as its spirit! So he didn't even go to see Aunt Cindy, because he just couldn't bear to go there with Barbara gone; and when the fellows asked him, he s'posed he might as well be at Manasquan as any place; he could fish, and think about his girl—

At Christmas, Mrs. Landridge went once more to Chicago, and Barbara wondered grimly how much longer they were going to keep it up—Jimmy avoiding her, as she believed, at the Christmas holidays, and she dodging him during the summer vacation. But this year Jimmy did not come home in June. He was going to work in the Osgood, Harper and Osgood offices all summer, his mother told Barbara, in the expectation of being ready for Paris in the fall. Well, Barbara needn't go away this year, then. That simplified matters, for in spite of her morbid dread of meeting Jimmy, and much as she would have enjoyed another summer with the Hanchells, for which invitations were arriving almost daily, yet she couldn't but feel that the MacKenzie-Wells occurrences had spoiled Littledale, rather, as a place of refuge!

## XIV

Barbara Ann was no Peter K-napskittle in petticoats. Persons with axes and other cutlery to be sharpened found hers no willing hand at the grindstone; not that she meant to be disobliging—more than that she would do, and cheerfully, where her heart pointed the way. But this “crush” of Stella Martine’s—was it an ax-handle she glimpsed beneath the cloak of affection which Stella apparently had donned with her summer raiment?

Heretofore there never had been more than a surface friendliness between the two girls, and Barbara, while outwardly cordial, had some slight suspicion of a nigger in the woodpile; Stella was almost *too* honeyed. Moreover, she seemed to have Jimmy very much on her mind, and Barbara didn’t want to talk about Jimmy, least of all to Stella Martine. Not even to Ethel Harbie, her closest friend, with whom she discussed everything else, from immortality and votes-for-women to the new sleeves, could she say much about Jimmy. And now Ethel had gone off to Europe with her mother, leaving Barbara with this inexplicable friendship on her hands, and the conviction that Stella, in some devious way of her own, was trying to reach Jimmy through her. Barbara smiled a crooked little smile at the absurdity of it; didn’t Stella know that she and Jimmy were—were not—whatever it was they were or were not? What was it she had up her sleeve, anyway? If she wanted to know things about Jimmy, why



didn't she ask his mother? She *saw* her often enough, goodness knows!

Stella had asked her, with purely negative results. The astute Mrs. Landridge, bent on preserving her son from matrimonial pitfalls on account of his career, would hardly snatch him from one fair enslaver only to hand him over to another, and that other a female nincompoop like Stella Martine. The sentiment, you understand, is Mrs. Landridge's. So in the matter of authentic information Stella wasn't very well equipped for the project she had in view.

For instance, she had heard nothing of the plan for Paris-in-the-fall, else she might have changed her tactics and rushed her objective, instead of pursuing the leisurely campaign she had mapped out in the expectation that Jimmy would be spending the summer at home. Nor was she fully cognizant of the break between Jimmy and Barbara, though she did think Barbara unnaturally reticent, if they really were as devoted as people supposed. Stella's "fellows" pervaded her conversation like the odor of the sea on an east wind!

Amory Booth, according to Stella's plan, was to be the lever with which to pry Jimmy loose from his allegiance to Barbara Ann. This was her design—to become so firmly intrenched in intimacy with Barbara that when the two young men, equally inseparable, should arrive home from their respective colleges for the long vacation, the four would drift naturally into close association; and given such a combination and a few weeks' time, Stella had no doubt whatever of her ability to pair off the little group according to her own ideas. For all her mushroom affection for Barbara Ann, her opinion of that young woman's

powers of fascination was nil; Stella, you see, had never heard of young Doctor MacKenzie; nor about John Wells, the miller's son, either!

Now Stella wasn't really a bad sort. She was no vampire—or whatever we called them in those days—nor indeed any brand of villainess whatsoever, but merely a wholly selfish young person, trained by doting parents from earliest childhood to have her own way at all costs. She much preferred having it by fair means when practicable; at the same time she would not scruple to use, if not foul, at least questionable ones, should the exigencies of love or war demand. And James Warren Landridge, his name ringing aristocratic in her ears, his handsome person, his undoubted ability and probable future distinction, seemed to Stella infinitely desirable, and worthy of her best efforts to acquire.

You see, Stella, though she lived in the old Sloane mansion, and her people had the means to gratify her least whim, was hardly of that social upper crust known as "the Hill set," nor yet of the older aristocracy represented by the Lanes and the Lawrences, the Bancrofts, and the Rossiters. It would take all of another generation to erase from public memory old "Boat" Martin, with his red flannel undershirt, his clay pipe, and his too frequent indulgence in strong waters; and of poor futile Marthy, his wife, who probably would have failed to recognize her own face in the wiggly kitchen mirror, if it chanced not to be adorned with at least one black eye, the gift of her lord and master.

The only son of this worthy couple, eschewing red flannel, tobacco and whiskey, came at a suit-

able age to marry the daughter of the man who had reaped the benefit of his father's boundless thirst; a clever young woman, and ambitious to lift herself above the social level of saloon-keeping. She took the helm forthwith, and caused her well-to-do father to set her carpenter husband up in the building and contracting business; she furnished her house in the plush-and-walnut splendor of the eighties; had visiting cards engraved with "Mrs. John Allison Martine"—though whence the "Allison," likewise the final *e* annexed to the paternal Martin, *Mr.* John Allison Martine knew not; and with her children set herself to storm the citadel of social recognition. Stella was a credit to her mother's training; but Percy had in some degree reverted to type, substituting costly cigarettes for the clay pipe and exotic drinks for the fiery raw liquor of his grandfather's indulgence.

The part of Mr. John Allison Martine was to provide the sinews of war; which, with the aid of politics and a not too close-fitting conscience, he had done as lavishly as even Mrs. John Allison Martine could desire. Now but one thing more was needed—an alliance with one of Red Haven's "best families" which would open many doors hitherto barred to the descendants of old "Boat" Martin and of Cromwell the saloon-keeper; hence Stella's personal preference for Jimmy met much encouragement at home, and her plans for his annexation had her mother's unqualified approval.

And then after all it was Barbara herself who in a single moment of pride and shame and hot resentment, made all this elaborate scheming null and useless, placing in Stella's receptive hands a veritable sledge-hammer wherewith to smash her



happiness and Jimmy's, instead of the gentler weapon Stella had thought to use.

Stella had run in one afternoon, bubbling with news. She had just got a letter from Cousin Fanny Cromwell, in Chicago; "*You* remember, Barbara; the one who was here that summer we girls had the cottage at Barnegat—tall girl with Titian hair—"

Barbara remembered. Barbara also remembered that Cousin Fanny had been inclined to snub the Red Haven girls, as denizens of a jay town quite remote from her urban consciousness; the jayness of the town seeming not to reflect so much on the Red Haven boys, however. And Cousin Fanny's hair, as Barbara remembered it, was red—but that, of course, was neither here nor there.

Stella rattled on with seeming guilelessness, an eye on Barbara, consciously demure. "And what do you think—she's met Jimmy—at a fraternity dance, I think she said. I meant to bring the letter, but Mama called me to hook her up, and I must have laid it down somewhere. I do hope I haven't lost it. She remembered him right away, on account of his being so tall and good-looking, and he said talking to her was like meeting a friend from home. She said he took most all her dances, so they could talk, and she asked him to call and he said he would, but Fan wasn't sure, because one of the girls said he was an awful fusser with girls, he'd go with one a little while and then drop her like a hot potato, and the last one was the cutest little blonde, but peroxide prob'ly, because it seems she was a chorus girl or something, and you know what *they* are—!"

Stella had to breathe at last. "Oh, dear!" she

sighed, "I'm afraid Jimmy's getting the habit!"

"Why, what habit?" asked Barbara, a trifle grim.

"Oh, jilting girls!" Stella explained airily, but with a side glance of inexpressible slyness at Barbara's startled face.

Then it was that Barbara Ann lost her head and her temper, and with them her last hope of a reconciliation with Jimmy. . . . During all these months she had struggled through utter bewilderment to a half belief that some changing wind of circumstance *must* blow away this misunderstanding which enveloped them like fog drifted in from sea. Day by day she had swung like a pendulum between hot anger at Jimmy, and cold fear lest the wind might not change, after all . . . and now she knew! No use trying to fool herself any longer—Jimmy *hadn't* meant the things he had said that night; he was "just practicin'," like Piggy Wilson. Or maybe he had *thought* he meant it, till he met those others . . . and Jimmy wouldn't pretend to go on caring. But oh! He might have written and told her how it was—was he afraid she'd make a fuss, and try to hold him? Didn't he know her better than that? Did he *dream* she would lift a finger to keep him, if he wanted to go?

"Jilted" isn't a pleasant word, and Barbara had avoided it in her thought; but now she had to face it. Jilted! She, Barbara Thair! Stella believed it, and Heaven knew how many others; and in spite of all her care, all her brave assumption of happiness . . .

Barbara never stopped to consider the unlikelihood of Jimmy's doing such a thing, at least in such a way, to his lifelong friend and playmate.

She was possessed by a mad, unreasoning fury that paralyzed every thought, every inhibition, save the impulse to defend herself from this public ignominy. And so, abandoning truth and loyalty, throwing all caution to the winds, Barbara Ann spoke the words that were to cause her years of untold sorrow, of heartache unbearable.

"Oh! meaning me?" she drawled with amused contempt. "Well, you can count me out, I guess; I'm not among the mourners! Of course, Jim and I played around together lots when we were kids, but that's all. Since we grew up there never has been anything between us, and never will be, of course. Jim's more like a brother—"

"Why, Barbara Thair!" Stella's eyes grew big with incredulity. (Stella, you see, *had* a brother!) "Why, you were together nearly all the time, that last summer he was home, before he went to college! You know you were!"

"Well, and don't you know why?" Right here Barbara turned loose her imagination, regardless. "Why, it was 'Freak' Liddell! I just *had* to let Jimmy stick around—the 'Freak' was acting awful, and I simply used Jim where he'd do the most good. He didn't mind, because he was going away in the fall, anyway. Jimmy's a good kid; I like him a lot, of course—" Barbara paused; her voice required steadying. There! That's better! "—But—oh, well, I suppose it's because we've known each other so long—"

Stella was polite, but unconvinced; so Barbara yawned widely behind her hand, offering in apology some mention of Ted Rossiter, and of the hour of his departure in quest of beauty sleep, the previous evening. How Ted did love to see the last dog hung, always!



They gossiped a little about this and that; about Ted, and Ban Hendrickson, and Bessie Paige; and wasn't Ban's cousin from Trenton just the dandiest fellow! "Belle Lorimer's party? Oh, is it going to be a henfest? I hadn't heard. I don't know—I might go. Belle always has such perfectly gorgeous eats, don't you think?" And wasn't it funny about Miss Agatha Lawrence marrying Mr. Nichols after all these years, and he so fat and bald, and *forty* at the very least!

But when Stella had gone, Barbara stumbled drunkenly to her room, and for the first time in her healthy young life, fainted dead away.

However, something happened a week or two later that drove from her mind all recollection of her talk with Stella. She forgot the look of sly comprehension, the nigger in the woodpile, the claws beneath the velvet. Amory Booth came one evening with a message from Jim.

"He wrote," said Amory, "'when you see Barbara, just say to her for me—*October third!*' That was all, just 'October third.' Seems kinda funny, but probably you know what he means."

"Why, that's Jim's birthday!" Barbara exclaimed, hardly daring to believe she heard aright. "He'll be—why, he'll be twenty-one!"

"That's right! I never thought of that; but what's the idea? Does he expect a birthday present, or what? I thought it was a date he was making!" grinned Amory.

"Well, maybe he was!" Barbara replied, laughing as she had not laughed in months.

"Well, why didn't he write it to you then, instead of me?" Amory spoke almost peevishly. Reason enough, too; who wouldn't feel peevish,

and act so, seeing the lovelight leap into dear brown eyes at a message from one's best friend?

"You can search *me!*" Barbara grew joyously slangy in the immensity of her relief. "Have to ask Jim, I guess!"

Ask Jim—yes, *she* could do that now. At last the barrier was down. Now she was to know the reason for his long silence, these two years without a word—and there *had* been a reason, else why should he have sent that cryptic message?—a reason which would be a reason no more, on October third. Those girls in Chicago didn't worry her now. It was going to be all right at last—on Jimmy's birthday!

## XV

For the rest of that summer Barbara was like one awakened from some horrid nightmare, telling herself over and over again, "oh, it isn't true, it isn't true!" revelling deliciously in the assurance that her fears were but stuff-o'-dreams. Some pigmy misunderstanding, grown to giant proportions in her mind, had affrighted her beyond all reason; she didn't even try to guess what it had been—what matter, now? Soon Jimmy would set her world aright once more; October third, the day of days, came flying on happy wings. She flashed about the house like joy impersonate, singing, dancing, gayer even than the old Barbara ever had been. Aunt Cindy, though perplexed, hailed the change with delight. New dresses? Why, of course! What would Barbara like? This revival of a long-dormant clothes interest reassured Aunt Cindy as nothing else could have done, and she would cheerfully have bought forty dresses instead of the four Barbara chose. How good it seemed to have the child her own merry self once more!

The morning of the third of October, dawning warm and bright, one of those left-over summer days with which autumn gives the lie to threats of approaching winter, found Barbara Ann quite tremulous with excitement. Her household tasks were got through with a dash and vim which made short work of them; then she dressed in the prettiest of the four new frocks, and established her-



self on the porch with a bit of embroidery destined for her long neglected hope chest. From here she could see the corner Jimmy must turn; and what with keeping an eye on that corner, and the uncontrollable trembling of her fingers, it is small wonder if the close-set stitches were hardly as perfect as they might have been. Would he come in the morning, dashing in among them as of old, with a whoop for Barbara, a hug for Aunt Cindy, a bit of nonsense for Grandma's delight, and a general "Hurrah, boys!" right and left, as Uncle Ben described it? Or would he come in the afternoon, garbed and mannered to match the dignity of twenty-one and a two years' residence in Chicago? Or in the evening, that this wondrous hour of reunion might be theirs alone?

He did not come in the morning, and Barbara was disappointed, but not unduly so; it would have been so prosaic, almost an anticlimax, in a way. . . . He did not come in the afternoon, either; and again Barbara was disappointed, but still, it was well; *that* would have been so conventional, and not a bit like Jimmy. . . .

It was early evening, just after supper, when she saw him at last, rounding the corner by the drug store. Barbara would have risen from her chair, but couldn't; her knees were as water, she was hot and cold and shaking and not a little mortified thereat—when suddenly she saw what Jimmy's bulk or her own agitation had hidden from her at first: Jimmy was not alone. Walking at his side, preening, coquetting, was a girl! And the girl was Stella Martine.

Now wasn't that—Barbara asked the world—just like Stella? To come poking along, tonight of all nights! Oh, it was a shame! . . . The

two stood for a moment at the curb, and Barbara was almost sure that Jimmy looked toward the house, though he could scarcely have seen her through the screening vines; then they turned and entered the drug store. Barbara sighed her impatience. Oh, well, if Jimmy could get off at the price of an ice-cream soda, they were in luck after all. It was yet early. Eagerly she watched for them to emerge; oh, dear, what an unconscionable time it was taking to dispose of those sodas!

Ah! At last! Now Jimmy would shake Stella somehow, and come to her. . . . Why, *what!* Barbara could scarce believe her eyes. No, Jimmy, *no!* Not *that* way! It's *here* your girl is waiting, waiting for you, Jimsy—here on the old porch of fragrant memories; scene of many a childish frolic, of the long, happy talks of later days, of—oh, Jimmy, come back, *come back!*

But Jimmy could not have heard the cry had she really uttered it; for now he was quite out of sight down Asbury Avenue, Stella tripping hatefully beside him, laughing up at him with sprightly assurance, sparkling as only Stella could sparkle. Barbara pulled herself sharply together. It would not be so easy, she reflected, to “shake” Stella, if Stella chose not to be shaken. Jimmy would have to take her home, of course, in order to get rid of her; he would be down later.

It was too dark to sew now, even if Barbara could have controlled those shaking hands; so she sat with them tight-clasped in her lap, watching the corner till her eyes ached. The arc-lights blazed out, and still Barbara watched. The big clock in the tower of St. Michael's boomed eight measured strokes, followed by the old grandfather's clock in the hall, like a sharpened echo;

then came Mrs. Cap'n Sickles' mantel edition of the chimes of Westminster; a cuckoo shrilled from Mrs. Parkins' dining-room windows; from old Mrs. Black's kitchen a tinny one-two-three-four-five came hurrying, as though quite out of breath with trying to catch up with the procession. Now surely Jimmy would be coming soon!

St. Michael's again—nine o'clock; the clock in the hall; the chimes; the cuckoo; Mrs. Black's, farther behind than ever . . . ten o'clock, and the whole thing over again . . . eleven . . .

Oh, how cold it had grown! Barbara hadn't known it ever was so cold as this, on the third of October. She got stiffly to her feet and went indoors. Uncle Ben was still reading; Barbara crept quietly up the stairs and sat down in the dimness of her own little room.

What, then, had Jimmy meant by that strange message, "October third?" He had come home, apparently for the express purpose of being there on that day; Mrs. Landridge had said that she expected him late on the evening of the second. He was to sail on Saturday, so would have but a few days at home; his mother would go up to New York to see him off. Barbara had smiled when she heard this, thinking it not unlikely that she, too, would be of the party to bid the traveler *bon voyage!*

Rallying all her forces, Barbara at length shook off her bewilderment and apprehension. In some way Stella had made it impossible for Jimmy to get away; yet it did seem as if he could have managed somehow—he was resourceful enough when he wanted something very badly. Well, and so was Stella, for that matter. Perhaps in the morning—but it was with a heavy heart that Bar-



bara at last began slowly to make ready for bed.

The next morning, however, brought no Jimmy, nor the afternoon, nor yet the evening, though again Barbara waited until eleven, knowing miserably that it was no use, he would not come. Nor was there any word nor sign of him the following day. Barbara stayed closely at home, lest they meet on the street and be compelled to speak in the presence of others, or worse still, pass without speaking; she had no idea how it would be. And when Saturday passed and she knew that he had gone, had sailed without a word to her, sailed away to be gone for years, something in Barbara's heart seemed to die; something that she still must carry about with her, an intolerable burden, like the albatross of her childhood. At first she hoped a little, vaguely, for some message; but as the days passed and none came—ah, well, of course, she hadn't really expected to hear—

It came to her like a flash of lightning at midnight, blinding her, searing her very soul—the explanation of it all. A fortnight later it was, and Barbara sat with a book, sunning herself on the front steps. At the sound of a friendly hail she looked up, to see Stella Martine going by on the opposite side of the street, escorted by her newest acquisition, one William Smith, the "Bull" of yesteryear; brother, you remember, to Thankful Cordelia Jennie May Smith. Stella waved an amicable hand, and "Bull" swung his hat high. "Bull" was one of those boys who would have liked to walk home from school with Barbara, if it hadn't been for Jimmy.

Barbara waved in reply, and had returned to her pretense of reading, when suddenly before

her eyes there danced in letters of flame, words that were not in the book at all: "*had to let Jimmy stick around to keep 'Freak' Liddell away*"—"simply used Jim where he'd do the most good"—"*never been anything between us and never will be*" . . .

An avalanche of understanding swept down upon Barbara Ann at last. She could almost hear Stella purring it into Jimmy's ear over their tall glasses of foamy chocolate. With or without embellishments, it would have been enough for Jimmy; indeed it needed no embroidering at Stella's hands, for the words were utterly damning as they stood. *As they stood!* Hopeless enough at best, here indeed was food for despair—those dreadful words standing *alone* in all their bald, stark hideousness; the text without the context! For it was plain enough, to Barbara's suddenly clarified vision. Beyond any possible doubt Stella had repeated Barbara's words, but naturally she had *not* repeated her own, nor made any reference to the letter from Cousin Fan. Jimmy knew what Barbara had said, but he didn't know, never would know, how she had been stung into the saying of it. Perhaps Stella herself hardly realized it, till her random shot struck home. Not that it would have gone far in extenuation in Jimmy's eyes; but oh! how Barbara did wish he knew, that he might perhaps blame her a little less bitterly, despise her a little less completely!

She herself had no words for the horror she felt. She was bruised and numb with the shock of realization. She wanted to run to Jimmy, crying out the truth, groveling at his feet, begging him to forgive the hasty words, the silly, meaningless words, the cruel, lying words; knowing that they

were unforgivable, a rankling barrier between them for all time.

With a vicious *clang* the gate of yesterday's garden slammed shut in Barbara's face, and she could only peer through the keyhole at a little girl wearing the brand of Ananias, with Aunt Annameel sternly explaining what becomes of little girls who are "lyers." Oh, but Aunt Anna-meel had been right; Barbara knew, now, how terribly right Aunt Annameel had been!



## XVI

Through the weeks that followed it seemed to Barbara that she just couldn't go on living in a world that held no Jimmy; at any rate she was almost sure she didn't want to. Oh, dear, why must one breathe and eat and sleep as usual, when all that really mattered in life had gone completely to smash? Yes, and smile, too; especially did one have to smile, Barbara soon came to understand.

To her morbid imagining the most ordinary civility of those about her was tinged with pitying kindness. "Jilted, poor child!"—she could almost read the thought in the back of their minds. Did this one know that Jimmy had been in town for *days*, and hadn't exchanged a word with her, hadn't been near her, though nearly all the other girls had seen him and spoken with him? Had that one heard of his newer loves in Chicago? Did the other believe Stella's open boast of her weekly letters from Paris, an arch look and a meaning smile hinting at much more that might be revealed if she chose?

But far, far worse than the imagined pity of her friends was the certainty in Barbara's heart of hearts that she herself, by her own stupid, unconsidered speech, had cast aside her greatest happiness when it was all but within her grasp. She never thought of blaming Stella. What Stella had done was the kind of thing Stella naturally would do, as Barbara very well knew. Oh, *why* had she not guarded her tongue, her miserable, lying tongue! Could it be that she, Barbara

Thair, was sunk so deep in sin that she just went ahead and *lied* like that, without meaning to, almost without knowing, when she opened her mouth, that she was going to? Had she, after all, no principles, no character, no instinctive feeling for what is right and fine and true? Was she, at heart, a "lyer"?

Barbara shed no tears; her grief and despair were too deep to find relief that way. But she brooded much, milling it all over in a hopeless circle, till she came to wonder "if indeed this could be I"—the light-hearted Barbara Ann who had gone happily along her pleasant way in that so-long-ago before the ending of the world.

Aunt Cindy wondered too, and was likewise in despair. Here was Barbara, after that brief return to her accustomed joyousness, plunged again in the sorrowful apathy of two years ago. Jimmy again, of course—*drat* the boy! but how, and what? Appeals to Barbara, direct or indirect, availed nothing. Nothing was the matter, everything was quite all right. Jimmy? Oh, yes, he was home for a day or two. No, she hadn't seen him. Did Aunt Cindy want her to match that silk this afternoon? The light would be good; you couldn't tell anything about those pastel shades by artificial light—

For a time Barbara made little effort to hide her unhappiness, avoiding her friends in great measure and shutting herself out from the little gaieties of her set; but not for long. Again pride came gallantly to the rescue, showing her very clearly how such behavior would be construed. Well, then! If people were going to believe that Jim Landridge had jilted her for Stella Martine or anybody else, at least she needn't let them sup-

pose she cared! So she began again to accept invitations and plan little frolics as before, going about with one and another of the fellows; Amory, of course, when he was home; sometimes "Bull" Smith or one of the Lansing boys. They danced and skated as usual, and went to all the "nice" parties; then there was the Embroidery Club, and the Birthday Club, and the Altar Guild, and the Girls' Friendly; there were showers for the girls who were going to be married and luncheons for them after they *were* married; and on afternoons not otherwise occupied they played duplicate whist—at Bessie Paige's, usually, because she had the best set of boards and it saved lugging them around. And there were the boys' beefsteak-and-onion suppers on Saturday nights; and now and again, when some hoped-to-be Broadway success was brought to the Red Haven Opera House to be "tried on the dog," Barbara and her friends were wont to identify themselves most enthusiastically with said canine, occupying a box sometimes, or a solid phalanx of orchestra chairs.

After the show they would repair to "some place where the eating was good"; perhaps to the Lansings' to make fudge or lobster a la Newburg in the chafing dish; or they might raid Aunt Cindy's pantry, or toast crackers and cheese and marshmallows at the dining-room grate. At other times they supped gaily at the new "Grill," or at Red Haven's one Chinese restaurant, where they sat upon onyx benches, very chilly, at tables of exquisitely inlaid wood, and devoured great bowls of delicious "chow main" and "yakey man," with a dessert of preserved golden limes from Canton, served with a wooden toothpick stuck in each one so you needn't get your fingers sticky;



while the more timid shivered in delightful terror of tong battles and other strange heathen diversions.

Barbara waxed hilarious with the rest over the difficulties of eating rice with chopsticks, or over Bob Lansing's "Welsh rabbit" which was always going to be exactly right *this* time, or over Ted Rossiter's eyeglasses, that were continually dropping into the fudge. If it were but pretense, at least it was a right gallant one; especially in Stella's presence did Barbara quite overflow with mirth. Indeed they should not know, should not even remotely guess, how terribly she cared!

Amory was the best ever. How much he knew or surmised, what Jim might have told his friend, Barbara had no idea. He treated her always with the easy good-fellowship of their high school days, and seemed to make a point, though unobtrusively, of seeing that she had a good time. Therefore she was not surprised when he asked her to go with him to the Charity Ball on Christmas eve—the event of Red Haven's social season; she was surprised only at the *manner* of his asking.

"Barbara," he had begun diffidently, almost apologetically, "it would be all right, wouldn't it—Jim wouldn't mind, do you think?—if you went with me to the Christmas dance, I mean. That is, of course—if you cared to—"

Barbara looked at him soberly, appraisingly. He didn't know then, how serious was the break between herself and Jimmy. Hadn't Jimmy told him *anything*? And could it be that he hadn't heard the gossip about Jim and Stella?

Amory *had* heard it, on the best authority—that of Stella herself; and he had the more readily on

that account set it aside as pure fiction and unde-filed by any taint of plausibility. It certainly didn't fit the facts as he knew them. Hadn't Jim, that summer in camp at Manasquan, continually exasperated poor Amory's unwilling ears with the tale of his love for Barbara Ann, his plans for their future? And his letters from Chicago—one sentence in three either began or ended with her name, or so it seemed to Amory. On the whole, he very much doubted that Stella had managed thus expeditiously to switch Jimmy's affections to her very charming self. Why, Jimmy had loved Barbara all his life, practically, just as Amory had, and Amory knew how much chance there'd be of himself falling in love with any Stella Martine!

But what was this Barbara was saying? . . .  
“Why, thank you, Amory; I *should* like to go to the dance, and I'll go with you, gladly.—But about Jim—well, you see—that's all off—for always, Amory.”

“What, Barbara! All off—between you and old Jim? Why—I don't understand—”

“Well, it's so,” she answered, “and we won't speak of it again, please, Amory. Let's go to the dance, and—forget it!”

The little shrug which pointed the lightness of her speech was almost flippant; and Amory was troubled. Certainly everything had been all right when last he had talked with Jim. He understood that Mrs. Landridge had exacted of her son some sort of a promise concerning Barbara, but Jim hadn't seemed greatly perturbed over it, evidently expecting that things would smooth themselves out in time. No, it couldn't be that. . . . Amory hadn't seen Jim this last time he had been home, except for a few minutes aboard La

Touraine before she sailed. They hadn't spoken of Barbara then; of course, there hadn't been much time. . . . What could it be? And why, of all the girls in the world, Stella Martine?

Amory rather felt that friendship required him to talk it over with Barbara, or write Jim, or do *something* to help them to a better understanding. Why, Great Scott! Jim and Barbara—why, they mustn't be let to go on the rocks like this! It was unthinkable! Which perhaps is why Amory did think about it a very great deal. His quixotism, however, came to naught, for Jim utterly ignored those portions of his letters which bore reference to Barbara, and Barbara herself would discuss rainbows or radishes or life or death or any other creature, but she would *not* discuss Jimmy. Till Amory took courage of failure, and from grieving for his friend, came to be quite conscience-stricken at the leaping of his heart on his own account!

Amory and Barbara went to the ball as Jack and Jill, in costumes century old, from the Ferriss' attic. Amory was guiltily happy, and even Barbara almost forgot her heartache for a season, and really had a very good time indeed. For Barbara was young, and must have been fairly steeped in misery not to have responded in some measure to the lilt of the music and the tap of dancing feet. She threw herself into the revelry with gay abandon, as though to let no passing moment escape without yielding up its full content of pleasure; so that when midnight brought the mirthful ceremony of unmasking, those who knew her best marvelled at the identity of the merry Jill who had flirted so gallantly with both



Hamlets, sundry assorted Santa Clauses, and a glittering Jack Frost, while her own Jack looked on in admiring content.

From that evening Amory gradually slipped into Jimmy's place in Barbara's life, if not in her heart. Always he came to see her when he was home, week ends, and sometimes he would come down during the week as well—if there happened to be anything special going on. Two or three times that winter and spring Barbara and Aunt Cindy went up to the city shopping, and stayed over for a day or two, and Amory took them to dinner and to the theatre, and once to the Metropolitan to hear Calvé and de Reszké. But only when at last Barbara began to seem less unhappy, more like the Barbara of old, did Amory fairly give himself permission to love his love with all his heart, and to tell her so as soon as might be.

The opportunity came one evening in early summer, when the syringa bush at the end of the porch was starred with fragrant, waxy bloom. They had been chatting lazily about nothing in particular; Barbara drew a spray of the blossoms through her fingers as she talked; suddenly, out of one of those comfortable silences which fall between friends, Amory spoke:

“Bobs—Barbara, dear, is that still true, what you told me, you know—about its being all off between you and Jim?”

“Why—why, y-yes!” Barbara stammered in the strange turmoil of feeling which even now the very sound of Jimmy's name aroused within her.

Amory drew a long breath, and took the plunge.

“Well, then, Barbara—then there's no disloyalty in—in speaking—of something I've wanted to tell you—for months and years—oh, always, I

guess! Surely you know, dear; surely you must have seen how it is with me—how it's always been with me—about you, I mean. But there was always—Jim, and so I couldn't speak."

He captured the slim, sun-browned hands, blossoms and all, and forced her to look at him, his dark eyes aflame, hers veiled with misery.

"No, no, Amory, don't! *Please* don't!"

"I've got to, Barbara; and you've got to listen! Oh, Barbara, dear—I've loved you, seems like, ever since I can remember, but I can't go on forever—just looking on at another fellow's happiness—wait, Barbara, don't speak yet! Dear, I know there's something that hurts. I don't know what it is, and I don't want to unless you want to tell me; but if it's anything I can help about—if only you'd marry me, dear, and let me make you forget, make you happy again! We wouldn't need to wait—about money, I mean; after Commencement I'm going in the office with Dad, and anyway—you know I have enough—we could get married tomorrow if you were willing. Will you, Barbara? I don't mean tomorrow, of course—though if you would—God! But sometime, Barbara, will you?"

It was a long speech, but it had been long a-brewing, and Amory knew most of it by heart. A thousand times had he said it to Barbara Ann, eloquently, convincingly, with none of this stupid floundering; but in fancy only. Even now, so long was Barbara silent, he almost doubted—*had* he actually spoken this time, after all?

A long, long time she sat, while the minutes ticked themselves away on the great clock in the hall. She didn't know it could be heard so plainly out here. . . . Amory was waiting for his

answer; she must say "no," of course . . . but why? She wasn't Jimmy's girl now—she never could be, again. She liked Amory, more than anyone in the world, save Jimmy. Oh, Amory was *good*! He'd be good to her, make her forget— But she would have to *tell him*, and then—maybe even Amory wouldn't go on loving—a "lyer"!

"Oh, Amory! I don't know—I don't know!" It was almost a wail.

"Never mind, dear—some other time; I won't hurry you. You just tell me when you get ready; and if it's 'yes'—I won't let you be sorry, ever, Barbara—"

Barbara could only look her thanks; she could not trust her voice just yet. Amory, likewise, kept silence, and the perfume of the syringa blooms hung about them like incense before the altar of Love. Never again would the "yes" for which the man so ardently longed, be so close to Barbara's lips; yet he rose to go, all unknowing.

"Barbara, you couldn't, could you, dear—just one kiss, Barbara?" he begged, huskily.

She half lifted her face; Amory was so understanding, so good, so infinitely tender! . . . And then it came to her with a sudden tightening of the heart—he stood exactly where Jimmy had stood and said good-night, that one wonderful good-night! There at the top of the steps, beside the railing . . . She drew back abruptly, a sob tearing at her throat.

"Oh, no, no! I couldn't, Amory, I couldn't! I'm sorry—good-night"—and she fled within the house.



Amory's gentleness, perhaps even more than his words, did one thing for Barbara Ann; the floodgates of her misery were opened at last, and she could weep. Weep she did that night, as though her heart would break. Great sobs that shook and buffeted her slender frame, leaving her quite spent, but more serene than she had been since that dreadful third of October. And she knew what her answer to Amory must be. She had said to Jimmy, "always and forever, Jimsy, *your girl!*" And so it must be. Jim would never know, nor care; nevertheless with her it had to be as she had said, "always and forever," to the very end.

## XVII

Yet the next morning, as she set briskly forth to do the family marketing—Aunt Cindy said she'd rather do the breakfast dishes any day than dress and go down-street in the forenoon!—the temptation was strongly upon her to discard the hard-won conclusion of the night. Life could be very alluring, as Amory's wife. She dallied pleasantly with the thought: suppose she were marketing for Amory's dinner; there might be guests, perhaps . . . The greetings of the tradesmen, deferential, dignified—"good morning, Mrs. Booth; a beautiful morning! What can we do for you this morning, Mrs. Booth?"—in place of the casual "H'lo, Barb'ra; what'll it be?"—of today, from the clerks who had known her all her life; the going home—to Amory's house. Ah, why not? Why couldn't she, after all, forget Jimmy as he had forgotten her, and try to find happiness with this other, who loved her as Jimmy surely never had? Oh, if only she could!

She would have all that any girl need ask: moderate wealth, assured position, the love of an earnest, generous man; little children, perhaps . . . How foolish to yearn for the moon! Yet even as she argued she knew it couldn't be. The answer lay in her own heart, filled with such warm friendliness for Amory, but shaken to the depths by the very memory of the other, of his dear voice, his smile, the little tricks of manner . . .

Barbara's long association with Jimmy had given her an almost boyish sense of fairness; she

could not take so much and give so little. Besides—and she chilled at the thought—suppose she married Amory, and then after all Jimmy were some day, somehow, to come back into her life: could she trust her strength, and his? No, this was *her* tragedy; it never should be Amory's as well!

Her resolve newly strengthened and her errands done, Barbara was on her way home when she encountered Kitty Gerachty, matronly and serene, coming from St. Michael's. The two greeted each other warmly; they didn't very often meet since Kitty's marriage and the arrival in rapid succession of the two little Gerachtys. Kitty had been to confession, she said, and had to hurry home to the babies, left in her mother's care. Yes, they were perfectly well, and that sturdy! Joe was forever in mischief, and had to be watched every minute; and Baby Tim had two teeth already!

Barbara felt a queer little pang at the busy preoccupation of the other, a shock of repugnance at the cluttered emptiness of her own days, as Kitty chattered on about her mother and Uncle Tim and the children, and about Bill, who was doing fine in the new telephone company; why, this was the second time they had raised him since January! Yes, Barbara agreed, wasn't that splendid! And she surely would come soon to visit Kitty and the babies. Kitty must bring them over, too, for Grandma Ferriss to see—

Barbara's dissatisfaction grew apace. She compared her lot with Kitty's, and began to wonder, a little, as to when one stopped being "one of the girls" and began to be an old maid instead. The prospect wasn't pleasing, even at twenty! And



here was Kitty, scarcely older, and already possessed of all her heart's desire, while Barbara—why, even Kitty's pagan comfort of "going to confession" was denied Barbara!

In her present mood the idea of confession took on an unexpected interest, held an unlooked-for appeal. Not the more or less formal "confession" of the average Catholic; Barbara smiled as she wondered what darksome sins Kitty could have dug up out of her busy, happy life, that she must needs confess to Father Christian! But Barbara had reached a place in her experience where she felt the need of a fresh viewpoint, if nothing more. She had brooded within herself until her hot-tongued lie to Stella Martine loomed a very mountain of iniquity, distorting her view of all things else, crushing every hopeful impulse, obscuring the sun itself. She *couldn't* go on like this!

Time and again she had tried to tell her trouble to Aunt Cindy, but the words would not come; moreover, she dreaded the family conclave that might ensue. Uncle Ben she knew would be instant in sympathy, but would be all for bringing Jimmy back from Paris by force, if need be, in order to insure Barbara's peace of mind!

But now the thought of Kitty and her errand led to another, of Father Christian's freckled face, grave or jovial, but always kind. He would be busy at this hour, but later, perhaps—on the spur of the moment Barbara entered the drug store and telephoned. . . . certainly, Father Christian would see her—this afternoon at three.

Well! She was in for it now! Barbara had a fleeting thought of Aunt Annameel—wouldn't she be horrified!—and was glad, on the whole, that

there would be no need to mention it—to anyone. Yet she felt a certain conviction that the kindly priest, more than any other, would be able to set her feet on the right path. Even though he had nothing helpful to offer, it might clear the atmosphere to view her folly through his far-seeing and understanding eyes.

There was nothing so strange as might appear in Barbara's feeling that Father Christian would be able to help. It was a feeling shared by half the population of Red Haven, regardless of creed, for in his fifteen years' ministry at St. Michael's he had endeared himself to Catholic and Protestant alike. And this in a day and a community in which the line between the faiths was closely drawn and rigidly adhered to! Why, even that crustiest of "hard-shell" Baptists, old Ezri Higginson, the harness maker, who never before had been known to bestow the smallest measure of approval upon the benighted and unimmersed of other creeds than his own, spoke of Father Christian as "a gentleman, sir, and a Christian—Pope or no Pope!"—and was rather sorry that so good a man should have to be damned, through not being a Baptist!

Father Christian's closest personal friend was Judge Booth, Amory's father, and senior warden at St. Barnabas'; and many the fierce and friendly argument concerning Saint Peter and the Apostolic Succession, pursued beside the rectory fire of a winter evening. He had enemies, of course, as a man of his calibre is bound to have; indeed it was surmised by many, chuckling at his eccentricities, that the good Father was rather by way of being a thorn in the flesh of certain conservative dignitaries "higher up" in his denomination.

Certainly he did and said things that were—well, probably not downright uncanonical, but without established precedent, to put it mildly. However, he was a most valuable man, who had built up a great church from small beginnings; his tongue was as sharp as his spirit was fearless; and being also a great disrespector of persons, for the most part he went his way as he would.

Children adored him, and his love for them knew no creed. A child was a child to him, whether rich or poor, Catholic or “non-Catholic,” black or white; indeed, his was no unfamiliar figure along the slatternly streets of the negro quarter, where the pickaninnies swarmed about him like little dusky moths attracted by his flaming hair, his ruddy face, and the glowing warmth of his smile. It was even told of him, gleefully, that he had been seen marching up exclusive Summit Avenue one brilliant noontide, bearing on his shoulder an enormous basket of freshly laundered clothes, while a nondescript negro child, several sizes smaller than the basket, trotted at his side in animated converse!

He seemed always in a hurry, striding along as though pursuing a golden minute that he couldn't afford to lose; yet was never too busy to help little Lizzie McDermott with her arithmetic or Billy Harbie with his Latin, nor to play shinny-on-the-ice, on occasion, with the choir boys from St. Barnabas'. Winter afternoons often found him skating on the river with the boys and girls. He would come charging down the bank, his skates gleaming as they swung; a few deft tugs at the straps, and he was off at the head of the shrilling pack, coat tails flying, hat in hand to save it from the wind, which took what liberties it would with



his fiery mop of hair. For fifteen minutes, perhaps, he skated and shouted and sang, a boy with the boys; then he was gone, to write a sermon or visit a sick bed—

He was there that dreadful day when Gerald Heath and the two Hennessy boys broke through, and he it was who swept back the frightened children and fished the Hennessys out, afterward diving into the chill blackness to bring up Gerald, who had gone under the ice. All his days, in fact, were marked by deeds as benign if less heroic; you would see him guiding some palpitating old woman across a busy street, or pausing beside a trolley car to swing a group of children down from the too-high step, to the voluble gratitude of a bundle-laden mother. None was too high or too low for his hand to reach with needed help or sympathy; in mansion and in hovel his name was benison.

With unobtrusive care he had watched Sophie Ferriss' little girl through all her years. He had given heed, likewise, to the ways of both Jim Landridge and Amory Booth, perceiving that Barbara's happiness might one day lie in the hands of one or the other; but could find no serious fault in either. . . . Once he had been instrumental in pulling the two out of some youthful scrape—something that had to do with the disappearance of the Navesink Hotel "bus" one dark Hallowe'en, and its subsequent discovery moored to the porch of the Methodist parsonage, with Lucius Blackthorn's prize calf as its sole passenger. The calf, it appeared, sickened and died shortly afterward, and lawsuits threatened . . .

It was of these things Barbara was thinking as

she went to keep her appointment that afternoon, rather than of what she had to tell Father Christian; so that in answer to his half-surprised, wholly pleasant, "well, child?" she blurted out her first thought: "Oh, Father Christian, I wish I were a Catholic!"

Father Christian gave this due consideration, as he sat with elbows on chair arms, matching his fingertips with nice precision, ere he asked the obvious "why?"

"Oh, because—if I were I could—oh, I don't know! Enter a sisterhood, perhaps—anything so I'd have to work hard and not have time to think! Maybe if I had to do hard things all the time—make real sacrifices—if I just *had* to, I mean, maybe then I could forget—oh, Father Christian! It hurts so—I want to run somewhere and—hide!"

It was out at last; the rest was easy. Father Christian's gentle—"and you want to tell me about that, the thing that's hurting you?"—unlocked Barbara's troubled heart, and in a rush of sobbing, breathless words she told the whole pitiful tale, sparing herself not at all, blaming no one, not Jimmy nor Stella, nor anyone but herself. "Oh, how could I, how could I!" she moaned. "It wasn't true, and I said it, and now I've lost the only thing that—" She ended in a storm of passionate weeping.

Father Christian waited till she grew calmer; meanwhile taking off his glasses to polish them vigorously, but apparently not making a very good job of it, for having put them on, he immediately removed them and did it all over again. Then, when she was quiet: "But, Barbara, how am I to help? You know I will, if there's any way

I can; but—what about Mr. Seabrooke? He's Jimmy's pastor, and yours; isn't he in a position to do more for you than I possibly could? Have you talked with him at all?"

"Oh!" Barbara fairly gasped. "Tell Mr. Seabrooke? Oh, I couldn't, I couldn't *ever* do that!"

"But why not? Thought you liked Seabrooke?" There was just the suspicion of a twinkle behind the shining glasses, but Barbara didn't see it.

"Oh, I do, a lot; every one does!" she championed, loyally. "But—well, you see there's *Mrs.* Seabrooke; he'd tell her, I suppose. Oh, I don't mean she'd *tell*; she's lovely, too, but I'd always be perfectly sure she *knew*!"

Father Christian laughed outright, his big, jolly laugh. "Ha! Another argument for the celibacy of the clergy!" he exulted.

But Barbara was not to be diverted, and Father Christian became serious at once.

"Ever thought of telling the boy all this, all that you've just been telling me? It might be a bit hard on your pride; but don't you believe it would make a difference? Seems like you owed him some apology, come to think of it; what do *you* think?"

"Oh, no, no, *no*! Don't you see, that's the one thing I can't possibly do? You don't know Jimmy as I do. He'd be polite about it, but he'll never change *inside*, not in a million years! Besides, I'd hate myself worse than ever if I went crawling to him that way, with a lot of excuses; I *couldn't* do it. And—apologize! Oh, Father Christian, how can anyone *ever* 'apologize' for a thing like that?"

"H'm. Well, I thought probably you'd feel



that way." Then, after a moment, "Just what do you want me to do about it?"

"Do! Why, nothing; you mustn't *do* anything!" Barbara grew quite panicky at the thought. "Oh, you must promise that you won't do a single thing about it, nor say a word, not to Jimmy nor anybody!"

"Then what—"

"I want you to tell *me* what to do, to—forget, and maybe learn to feel differently about myself; I hate myself so!" she finished miserably.

"Like to get away somewhere, I suppose?"

"Oh, I *should* like to!"

"I see; new scenes; new associations; big, vital, absorbing things to do?"

Father Christian must be a mindreader; it was so exactly what she had been thinking! (In truth he was but repeating, parrotlike, the formula that had been dinned into his ears by discontented and disconsolate youth, for lo, these many years!)

"But you see, I can't do that; Aunt Cindy isn't strong; she needs me; I *have* to stay here!"

"We-ell, don't grieve for that, child; you'd be no better off. You can't escape trouble nor overtake happiness by running here and there; you've got 'em right along with you, whether you go or stay. Better stay here and fight it out; then, when you win, it's a *real* victory!"

"Fight it out, yes; but how? What can I do here, more than I have done?"

"More? What *have* you done? Anything beyond trying to stampede your unhappiness with the wand of pleasure? If you mean to fight, you need a worthier weapon. . . . There's only one I can recommend, from personal experience: the sword of 'do-unto-others.' Oh, I know it's

old-fashioned, but it's a good blade and a mighty blade, and it will prevail—only don't poison it with a long face, a mask of martyrdom. Fighting with poisoned weapons isn't—ethical! . . . Want to hear a story, Barbara?"

"A story?"

"Yes. A story about—your mother, and about a young man named Peter O'Connor."

So Father Christian, in a few quiet words, told Barbara the story you already know. "It's sometimes hard to tell what path leads to happiness, though we're all sure we know it," he ended, simply. "Looking back over the years, I can see that no enduring happiness would have come of such a union. Radical difference in religious belief isn't a good thing to have in the family, generally speaking; sometimes it works out all right, but more often it leads to other differences not so easily reconciled. Your mother, I think, found real happiness with your father, in the few years they had together. David Thair had a poet's soul, though he died too young to have been able to give it much expression. If he could have lived for the ripening of the years . . . And I found my happiness in my work. So you see there's joy along every road; but you'll never find it by hunting for it! Our souls are like our bodies—the less we think about them and tinker with them the healthier they're likely to be. Peter carved out his happiness with the sword of 'do-unto-others,' and the way it looks to me, Barbara, you'll have to do the same. At the worst, you'll get more out of it than from this modern craze for—what do they say—'self-expression'? Never fear; a self that has anything to express is going

to express it, gagged and blindfolded and handcuffed and with cotton in its ears!"

"If you've got a heartache, hunt up somebody with a worse one and doctor that instead of your own. If the way looks dark to you—there are little blind children to whom it is far darker. If your feet stumble—there are those whose feet never have the chance. And with a world full of things to 'do-unto-others', you come here sniveling about a pain in your inside!"

It was like a tonic, a call to arms, a flood of light in a dark place. How silly she had been, to think her little trouble bigger than the sun! Barbara nodded comprehension. "That's what I meant—about the sisterhood, you know. Oh, I don't suppose I'd want to, really; probably I'm not fit to, anyway—I'm afraid I'm not made of very heroic stuff—and I know it would kill Grandmother! But just for the moment—the sisters always look so happy and at peace, in the shelter of their big bonnets, so shut in behind their white—their white—" Barbara broke off with true Protestant vagueness concerning Catholic nomenclature.

"I think your feeling is the right one, Barbara. It isn't the way out, for you. . . . Don't think" he went on, gravely, his voice deepening with emotion, "that I should not welcome you into the Church with all my heart, if you were to decide, after deliberation and much prayer, that it is what you truly wish—and need—But I don't want you to come blindly, driven by pain and remorse, as you are now, expecting that by subscribing to certain articles of belief you will find surcease from suffering. The mere act of kneeling at one altar or another will not automatically erase bitter memories; not even taking the veil,



with all it involves of duty and sacrifice, will insure forgetfulness. . . . Indeed, it's no church nor creed at all that'll be pullin' ye out of the slough of despond ye're in, but the mercy of God and your own efforts! . . . There, now, run along with you; think I've nothing to do this day but sit and preach to you?"—the merry twinkle in his eyes belying the inhospitable words.

Thus dismissed, Barbara had no choice but to go; feeling wonderfully comforted, though when she came to think of it, Father Christian really had said very little, after all, about the disaster that had turned her world topsy-turvy. He had uttered no word either of blame or of extenuation: ah, well, what was done, was done; that, she supposed, was resignation; and now came service; and perhaps some day, "by the mercy of God and her own efforts," contentment. But happiness—?

For a long, long time after Barbara left him, Father Christian sat pondering, head bowed, fingertips joined in that characteristic attitude of thought. And for the most part his ponderings were as to how, without violating his promise to Barbara, he might contrive to "bring that young jackass to his senses!"

Barbara, hurrying home, smiled at the thought of winning happiness and peace of mind at the point of a sword, even the sword of service Father Christian had described. She looked at her right hand, seeming to see in its grasp that "good blade, that mighty blade" which he had assured her would prevail. She was still smiling a moment later, when in that same right hand she felt, not a sword hilt, but a warm, moist, and undeniably

sticky little paw, and found herself looking down into two trusting blue eyes, entirely surrounded by dirt.

"P'ease tate I yome, Yady; tate I yome!" the soiled one implored.

"Wh-why!" exclaimed the much-astonished "Yady"; "Why, mercy, yes, I'll take you home; where do you live? And what's your name?"

"Edad-Doodad-yiv-to-fo-ni-hoobyane!" was the incomprehensible reply, which the grubby mite repeated patiently again and again at her behest. "Edad-Doodad!" It might be the child's name, Barbara supposed; but *what*? And "yiv"—"live," perhaps? But "to-fo-ni!" And "hoobyane!"

Something vaguely familiar in the sound of the last syllables at length furnished a clue: Shrewsbury Lane? She started her charge hopefully in that direction, pondering meanwhile the rest of his cryptic utterance. "Ni—fo-ni"—four nine? Forty-nine? "Live at forty-nine Shrewsbury Lane?" she translated tentatively.

"*To-fo-ni, to-fo-ni!*" insisted the urchin.

"Two-forty-nine?"

"Too!" was the contented response, which subsequent conversation proved to be Edad-Doodad's interpretation of the affirmative. Barbara felt a glow of pride, which became a positive thrill on reaching 249 Shrewsbury Lane, where a distracted mother fell upon them both and embraced them alternately.

It was not until Barbara was almost home that the realization came: "Why, that's the very kind of thing Father Christian himself is always doing!" and she knew then that her new sword was indeed a keen and kindly weapon. Not that

she wouldn't have helped the little lost baby in any event, without the stimulus of Father Christian's words; but her talk with him had given her understanding, so that she herself might derive sorely-needed help from the little act of kindness. She, too, had been lost; but by the glow at her heart and the lightening of her spirit, she knew she was on the right road at last.



## XVIII

Not every thrust of Barbara's new sword struck home, however, nor rendered her its measure of easement. She learned that service doesn't always meet with gratitude, and that to serve truly she must do it for its own sake, not for the pleasure of being thanked. She found that there were many hard things that were not heroic nor spectacular; one of them, and the one oftenest required of her, being to bear with the infirmities of age in the person of Grandma Ferriss, now grown to be a very old lady indeed; a dear old lady, to be sure, but "trying" at times, as even the dearest of old ladies is apt to be.

It was natural for Barbara's youth to chafe under the restrictions Grandma's old-fashioned notions would impose—the peculiar deadliness of the night air, because of which wraps must be worn after sunset, regardless of temperature; the corresponding deadliness of "drafts," especially on the back of one's neck; the reiterated cautions as to doing this and avoiding that, which her love for her only grandchild seemed to make imperative. It was easy, too, to show impatience or boredom at oft-told tales, perhaps not uproariously funny in the first place. Barbara realized that, though she loved Grandma Ferriss dearly, she had insensibly slipped into the habit of ignoring her much of the time because it was less bother. Now, taking a fresh grip of her sword of "do-unto-others," she resolved not only to curb her irritation, but to substitute an active for a passive cour-

tesy toward the old lady. That had been one of Jimmy's nice ways—"jollyng Grandma," he called it.

So when Grandma Ferriss, seemingly under the impression that the family had never heard it, began for the hundredth time her story about old "Poppy" Dunker, up York State, who having buried his wife, had straightway provided himself with another and much younger one, and who used to say delightedly, "Vy, efery dime ven I hears mine new vife's liddle feet a-comin' piddy-pat-piddy-pat on der stairs, I tink to mineselluf, 'My, aind't I glad I put dot ole sick vife of mine in der cemetery und got me a nice liddle *new* vife!' "—she was surprised to hear a giggle from Barbara's side of the table. Pleased and encouraged, she told the one about the old woman who became too ill to prepare supper for her farmer son, digging potatoes in the field. "You know, Willum," she excused herself, "T'under allus make me so dreffle sick!"

"But, Ma," protested Willum, "there ain't been no thunder; the sun's been a-shinin' the hull arfternoon!"

"Mebbe so," was the reply, "but all the same it t'undered and it t'undered, and it made me dreffle sick, same way it allus do!"

"And she was, too!" Grandma Ferriss would add; "but the thunder she heard"—here Grandma would pause with dramatic intent—"why, it was nothing in the world but jest *potatoes* bein' dumped into the bin in the cellar!"

This time Barbara laughed outright, and Aunt Cindy and Uncle Ben also, in sympathy. Barbara's laugh was a pleasant thing to hear at any time, and they hadn't had any too much of it

lately. As for Barbara, she was thinking, "Why, Grandma's stories *are* funny, kind of, when you really listen to them; and you can't deny, Barbara Thair, that she tells them well!"—and instantly silenced the base thought, "Well she ought to; she gets practice enough!"

Not that Grandma Ferriss was an inveterate story teller; for the most part she maintained her old habit of silence, save when some chance remark led her into a long lane of reminiscence that apparently had no turning. One other thing could always be depended on to throw Grandma into a fit of positive garrulity, or so it seemed to Barbara Ann; that was the sight of some member of the family with book in hand, or about to write a letter!

In this respect Barbara had come to regard Grandma Ferriss as her special grievance; she never dreamed that Aunt Cindy, too, had sometimes to control an impatience as great as Barbara's own. But one evening, when Grandma had effectually routed the train of ideas Aunt Cindy was trying to incorporate in a letter to some of Uncle Ben's folks in California, and had taken herself off to bed in high good humor, Aunt Cindy laughed ruefully.

"Well, you see," she explained, to Barbara's glance of inquiry, "Ma is getting old, and old people are apt to be a little bit—well, difficult; just a little, the same as young people are sometimes, you know!"—with a sly glance at Barbara, who laughed at the good-natured thrust.

"Am I so very bad, then, Aunt Cindy?" she asked, with amused contrition.

"You? Bad? You're the dearest chick in the world!" Aunt Cindy averred, and meant it, too.



“And Ma is the dearest old lady in the world; not nearly so trying as lots of old ladies—yes, and old gentlemen, too!” Aunt Cindy giggled reminiscently. “Now there was old Johnny Raymond, out in Ashtabula. He lived with his son and daughter-in-law. Young John had done well; he made lots of money and they lived in great style. But every single day, after dinner, old Johnny *would* take out his false teeth, both plates, and put them to soak in his fingerbowl! Poor Lil finally had to give up fingerbowls——”

Together they went off into a gale of laughter; and with their tears wiped away every vestige of irritation with Grandma Ferriss and her ways.

It was at about this time that Barbara instituted her weekly visit to Aunt Annameel—somewhat in the spirit of a penitent donning his hair shirt. Each Friday afternoon she went to Hepzibah House, usually bearing an offering of home-made cake or some other dainty for the women's supper, for she suspected that all three paid rather more attention to their souls than to their stomachs; and for an hour or more sat in the stuffy little parlor, now speaking of family matters, now bombarded with scriptural texts and halleluias from three sides, the other two sharing with Aunt Annameel a sense of responsibility for Barbara's salvation and a genuine desire to do her good. The afternoon usually wound up with a season of prayer for Barbara's unregenerate soul, that she might be turned from the darkness of Episcopacy into the way of light and life. And it did do Barbara good, for she learned that hardest of all lessons to the young, tolerance; and with it a vast respect for these women, who didn't mind

being thought "queer" for the sake of their faith.

She learned to look upon the exaltation that found utterance in shouts of "Praise the Lord!" and "Glory, Glory!" as the same feeling that came over her in church, when they sang the *Te Deum* or the *Gloria in Excelsis*—why, the very words meant the same! Surely they had as much right to their way as she to hers! And they, while they pitied her profoundly, thought her the sweetest flower in the formal garden of the world, needing only to be transplanted, and watered with the Spirit, to bloom into full righteousness among the Children of Light.

Aunt Annameel's streaks of worldliness, moreover, amused Barbara mightily. Sandwiched between references to prophets and archangels, would be sly allusions to young Doctor MacKenzie; did Barbara hear from him? Ah, well, it was all vanity, the earthly marriage; praise the Lord, *she* had been spared that hindrance to the fulness of life eternal. And that young Wells—Cousin Savory wrote that he was making a great deal of money—had patented some new kind of breakfast food, made of whole buckwheat. But money was only a stumbling block, unless used for the furtherance of the Kingdom on earth. Didn't Barbara remember what it said in Luke eighteen and twenty-three?

There was no merit, Barbara found, in being nice to Aunt Cindy and Uncle Ben. She must have been churlish indeed to act otherwise toward them, but she redoubled her efforts to help and please both. She spent days with Uncle Ben in the store, helping him "take stock" preparatory to moving into fine new quarters in the Hendrickson Block. Indefatigably she labored, handling

the dusty tools, sorting bolts and screws and hinges, counting, listing, checking, till her back ached and her fingers were sore and so begrimed that she began to fear they never would be clean again. And then Uncle Ben had produced some wonderful soap, which had taken off the dirt quite magically; and against her laughing protest that she hadn't done half enough, he sent her home with a "Run along, Skeezecks! I don't want any dull Jacks at the supper table!"

Then Barbara bethought her of Father Christian's injunction, and took care thereafter to leaven the lump of her willing service with a measure of frivolity, in order that Jack shouldn't be a dull boy for good, *good* Uncle Ben!

The first anniversary of that direful third of October was a day of desperate activity to Barbara Ann. She dashed from one disagreeable task to another in a frantic endeavor to beat back the unwelcome thoughts that came crowding upon her, did her vigilance relax ever so little. So furiously did she work that when she had polished Aunt Cindy's cookstove to a dusky mirror; scrubbed upon her hands and knees the already spotless kitchen floor till it gleamed creamily white in even the most un-get-at-able corners; when she had cleaned the silver, and all the skillets and saucepans hung in glittering array, and Aunt Cindy wouldn't let her do a single thing more, to Barbara's despair it was hardly yet mid-afternoon.

Hurriedly she bathed and dressed, casting about in her mind for tasks to employ the remaining hours till bedtime. She might, she reflected, write those long-deferred letters for Aunt Cindy. Of late Aunt Cindy was inclined to regard letter-writing as a burdensome task to be postponed,



when possible, to a more convenient season, and it was Barbara who finally came to shoulder the burden of the family correspondence.

Thus it came about that after rummaging for pens and paper and addresses, with indifferent success, Barbara declared war upon the old secretary in the living-room, which served the whole family not only as a desk, but likewise as a convenient repository for innumerable odds and ends that didn't seem to belong anywhere else. It hadn't really been cleared out in years, although Aunt Cindy had made many a brave beginning; but what with various matters pertaining to "the store," and Barbara's old school themes and invitations and notes, and the inconsequent family communications which Grandma Ferriss never would allow to be destroyed, she gave up in despair, threatening to clear it out with a shovel some day! So that the sight of Barbara with sleeves rolled up, the light of battle in her eyes, cheered her exceedingly.

Apparently there were to be no half measures. Barbara was making a clean sweep, bundling Uncle Ben's business correspondence to be taken down to the store, sorting Aunt Cindy's letters for her personal perusal, and destroying much of her own share of the accumulation.

It was the very day for such a task. Outside, the world was drenched in a cold autumnal rain, at times becoming a veritable downpour that drummed deafeningly upon the porch roof and dashed against the window panes as if furious at being kept from the cheerful warmth within. A fire crackled and sputtered on the hearth, and Grandma Ferriss sat knitting beside it, basking in its heat quite as blissfully as did the big gray cat

stretched out on the rug. Not Ethel, of course; he long since had gone a-mousing in the happy hunting-grounds of his tribe. This was of a later generation of cats, by name Tiglath-Pileser, but commonly called Mike.

Insensibly Barbara relaxed to the comfort of the cheery room. Busily she sorted and bundled and tied and tagged, so that by supper time the old secretary was in a most surprising state of emptiness. Even Grandma's cherished Christmas cards and marriage announcements, and the letters telling of Cousin Henry's death and the birth of Carrie Hanchell's first baby, and the ones Cousin Mary Eustace wrote from Honolulu, were all neatly labelled and stowed away in the deep bottom drawer.

"Now, then, folks!" proclaimed Barbara gaily, when, Uncle Ben home from the store and Aunt Cindy hurrying in from the kitchen, the family stood about in speechless admiration, "Attendez! Observe! also, Lookit! The little drawer and spaces on this side are yours, Uncle Ben; these are Aunt Cindy's. The row across the top belongs to me, and the two in the middle are for Grandma."

"And now, ladies and gentlemen," she added impressively, producing with a flourish a very pink china pig with a slit in its back, a relic of her childhood, "allow me to introduce His Excellency, Paddy the Pig! He lives behind the inkstand; has a most awful appetite; eats nickels exclusively, and has to be fed one every time a letter or anything happens to stray into the wrong pigeonhole. When he's fat enough we'll butcher him and give the pork to the Salvation Army!

Well, how about it? All right, then; this way, Paddy. There we are!"

So Paddy the Pig became a family institution, and Barbara lettered some visiting cards with nonsensical reminders such as "Paddy's hungry; Uncle Ben to the rescue!" "Aunt Cindy, please give Paddy his supper," and "Oh, Miss Barb'ra, you're a robber, feed the pig, feed the pig!" And another, "Grandma dear, ain't you 'shamed! Paddy'll starve, and you'll be blamed!" Grandma Ferriss entered into the game with great glee, and Barbara even suspected her of now and then slipping a letter into a wrong compartment purposely, for the sheer joy of seeing her forfeit card propped up against Paddy's snout!

So Barbara found that each day brought its opportunity for service, both at home and abroad. It might be but the restoring of a crutch dropped by a cripple, or dismissing with a smile instead of a scowl, the perennial peddler at their door. But once, when Miss Ferguson's mother was taken ill on the eve of Milly Hendrickson's wedding, Barbara had turned to and sewed all night under Miss Ferguson's direction, so that Milly's dress was finished in time, and the little dress-maker could give her mother needed care.

Again, she spent hours making gay scrapbooks for the children in the infirmary at the "Norfumsilun"; made them small and light, not to tire wee hands weakened by illness, but pasted chock full of the prettiest and jolliest and most colorful pictures she could find, or beg, or buy. Again it was but the task of keeping her temper when Cousin Mary Lane, presuming on age and relationship, asked her if she weren't ashamed to keep poor Amory dangling at her heels; why



didn't she put him out of his misery, and let some other girl have him, if she didn't want him herself?

Even that Barbara did, outwardly; and had the satisfaction of knowing that her serene "I think Amory understands, Cousin Mary," was a more potent rebuke than any storm of angry denials could have been.

Thus she went on from day to day, coining contentment from the hard metal of her suffering, growing out of her bitterness into a sweet and gay and gracious womanhood. The old ache was still there, but buried so deeply beneath her new interest in the lives of others that at times she almost forgot its existence. Almost, but never quite. There were gloomy days and nights of black discouragement, when it would push itself to the surface and taunt her: "Oh, I'm here yet! All this does very well, of course; but what wouldn't you give to have your Jimmy back instead?" Oh, merciful Heaven, how she *wanted* Jimmy!

Of course she long ago had told Amory that he mustn't think of her in that way any more. She wouldn't let him hope when there wasn't any hope. She wished she *could* care for him as he deserved, dear, patient fellow that he was; what a lover he would be, what a husband, for *some* girl! But for her, since it couldn't be Jimmy, there just couldn't ever be anyone at all, not even Amory!

He had taken it quietly, and as quietly answered her: "It's all right, Bobs," he said; "you mustn't be distressed about it. And I'm not going to annoy you, either, but if you don't mind I'll ask you again sometime. I *can't* give you up, dear, so long as you are free. And you'll let me see you

and take you around the same as ever, won't you? You'll give me an even chance with the others?"

And that is the way it was settled. Amory kept his word and did not speak of the matter again for a long, long time, and Barbara was glad of his companionship, of his steady dependableness, his never-failing gentleness and tact.

## XIX

Barbara had another interest these days, which grew out of the incident of the old secretary. In the course of that orgy of orderliness which marked the advent of Paddy the Pig, she came upon a bundle of essays, compositions and the like, relics of her English classes in High School. One was a little story of schooldays, written as a class exercise; Miss Hampton had thought highly of it, she remembered. Now she paused in her rummaging to read it over, making a few corrections and annotations, and laid it aside. That evening she read it again and made more changes, finally rewriting it entirely. She was delighted with the ease with which ideas came to her, the quaint turn of a phrase, some unexpected facility of expression. She would read it again in the morning, to see whether cold daylight would rob it of its overnight smoothness and charm.

A week or so later, after a final polishing, Barbara gave her story to Aunt Cindy to read, and to Uncle Ben. Not for their judgment upon her work—that would be of little value, for they would read through the rose-colored spectacles of their love; but she wanted the courage their approval might bestow, to slip it into an envelope and send it to a more exacting judge on some editorial bench. At that time, though later she came to be on terms of friendly intimacy with more than one of the species, editors were fearsome folk to Barbara Ann!



But despite her fears, in due course the little story was on its way; and in due course it came home again, escorted by a printed slip, the wording of which Barbara thought unnecessarily polite. Still there was a ray of comfort even here, for across the back of the slip the editor of McKecknie's Magazine had written a few words of criticism and encouragement, with the suggestion that she "try again." And she did try again and yet again, till she thought Mr. Editor surely would regret having suggested it; but at last one of her homing pigeons came accompanied by a courteous note, expressing regret that McKecknie's Magazine could not use the excellent story enclosed, and offering the suggestion that it was perhaps more in line with the work appearing in some of the other publications. Had she, for instance, ever submitted anything to *The Amulet*? The editor of McKecknie's hoped to have the pleasure of examining such of Miss Thair's future work as—etc., etc., etc.

Barbara had an uneasy feeling the editor of McKecknie's wished to shift to other shoulders the burden of her too constant endeavor! If so, he did her a kindness unaware, for her subsequent check from *The Amulet* was the first of many, not only from that magazine but from others as well, and ere long from McKecknie's itself.

Now Barbara's persistence was not without due reason. McKecknie's was her goal, not for any super-excellence of its own, but because, of all the popular periodicals of the day, it was Jimmy's favorite. She knew of old that when he bought and read a magazine, aside from the journals of his craft, it was likely to be McKecknie's; and in spite of all that had come be-

tween them, she wanted Jimmy to read what she wrote. Perhaps he might find something of the old Barbara between the lines, earlier and pleasanter memories that might help, just a little, to dim that later and uglier one.

That was all, at first; but presently the idea began to take definite form, fascinating her more and more the bigger it grew: there was a way to *tell Jimmy!* Already the plot was unfolding in her mind—the tragedy of two lives marred by a girl's unconsidered speech to another girl. She would take the *text* of her own mad words, and fit it to the *context* of her provocation, with far-reaching consequences, and of course, a thrilling climax, after which "they" might or might not "live happy ever after"; that she could decide when she came to it.

Barbara realized that it could make no real difference; nothing she could do would bring Jimmy back to her now; she had said what she had said, and there was no unsaying it, no justifying it to him nor to herself. All she wished or hoped was that she might make him understand, in some degree, the shame and hurt resentment that had found their way from her heart to her lips that day. Surely Jimmy must know that to be jilted is a frightful thing to happen to a girl; but to be twitted of it, as Stella had covertly twitted her, with no power to refute the insinuation—that was the hurt unbearable!

How Barbara did work that winter, the third since Jimmy went abroad! It was hard work, too, for she felt sorely the lack of the college training she had been obliged to forego, being unwilling to accept of Uncle Ben and Aunt Cindy the sacrifices they would cheerfully, but of necessity, have

made in order to send her away to school. So she set to work, by reading and study, to bridge the gap between her equipment and her need, and the days were all too short for her varied tasks; yet her contentment grew day by day, keeping pace with the progress of the new story.

And when it was done and it seemed to the author that she could not further improve it, she laid it aside for months, that she might later seek out defects with unfamiliar eye. Laughingly she told Aunt Cindy that this was to be her masterpiece, and with ready interest Aunt Cindy contrived for her long uninterrupted hours for her work; for Aunt Cindy, no less than Uncle Ben, was tremendously proud of Barbara's small measure of success. She avowed that she had expected it all along; had seen it coming, in fact, on a certain day when Barbara was ten or thereabouts, and picking up a stray leaf from a notebook, she had read in childish script the following thrilling fragment:

“... with a hourse cry he seized her in his arms and hurried to the deck. He gazed upon her beautifull golden curls and her deep violet eyes fast-closed as she swoned in his arms, and solomonly swore that never again would he allow her to be torn from his graps, let Bruce MacFarlane do his worse! But at that momment a heavy—”

Truly it seemed that Aunt Cindy's faith was justified. The budding literary light of a dozen years before, having vanquished double consonants and other eccentricities of English spelling, was fast making “Barbara Thair” a name to conjure with.

But with no overt encouragement from Aunt



Annameel, you may be sure! Oh, the waste, the awful waste of time—precious time, and so little of it left in which to prepare for the Great Day! The waste of money, with manuscripts going back and forth—why, what she spent for stamps alone might, if directed aright, be the means of salvation for some soul now lost forever! And the sinful waste of time and money, too, on the part of those who would read such trash, when they might be dwelling on the precious promises of the Word!

Barbara tried not to mind—and didn't, after the time she happened in on a Thursday instead of Friday, and surprised Aunt Annameel absorbed in something very secular-looking in a jade green paper cover, which she hustled out of sight under a copy of *The Mission Weekly*. It couldn't have been, of course—yet that jade green cover certainly was the exact shade which distinguished *The Amulet*, set it apart from its contemporaries!

## XX

Jimmy's fourth and last year at the Beaux Arts was nearing its close when a great sorrow again shook the foundations of his world. His mother's death occurred quite suddenly, although she hadn't been really well for a long time, and Cousin Camilla Winslow had come North to stay with her. Still, her condition had not been deemed serious enough to warrant sending for Jimmy; indeed she had written most cheerfully to the very last, making light of her illness, and even planning the vacation trip they would take together when he should return.

Since it would be impossible for Jimmy to reach home before the funeral, Judge Booth, who had charge of Mrs. Landridge's affairs, wrote that he might as well, if he wished, remain abroad until his work there was finished. It was undoubtedly what his mother would have advised; he (the judge) would look after things in the meantime, there being nothing which required Jim's immediate attention. Miss Winslow would stay on until he returned, or as long as he wanted her to stay; Jimmy would find her there, and the house open, whenever he was ready to come home.

With this permission Jimmy delayed week by week, persuading himself that he needed another month or two in Italy, in southern France, in Germany. Then he dallied in London a fortnight or more, dreading to come back to his native land, back to the loneliness of the big house, dreading

still more the inevitable meeting with his old playmate, once for a little, little space his sweetheart, so dear, so dear. . . .

Jimmy tried in vain to determine just how he did feel about Barbara Ann. He had gone away, blazing with wrath, sick with injured pride, disappointed, disillusioned, vowing to erase from mind and heart all remembrance of the girl who had so wounded and betrayed him. He had tried, very hard indeed he had tried, for four long years. First he had tried to wipe away, with hate for a sponge, the memory of their last meeting: the broad porch with its wicker and chintz; Barbara's face upturned to his in the moonlight—Judas' kisses! he sneered. . . . Of a sudden he seemed to feel again the sickening sidewise tilt of a capsizing boat; again he grew cold with horror as he saw the water close above a dark, childish head—Here, here! This would never do! The way to forget a woman, of course, was—women! Why hadn't he thought of that before?

So, with vague melodramatic thoughts of conquest and intrigue, ending, of course, when he ceased to be amused—never again would you catch Jim Landridge tying himself up to a woman!—he snatched at the first chance that offered, and began to answer Stella Martine's letters; until, growing ever more fervid, they filled him with disgust more potent than his carefully fostered wrath at Barbara Ann. *She* hadn't been like that! Ah, the sweet, shy coolness of her, always!

A dozen scenes flashed upon the screen of his memory, till once more he had to pull himself up sharply, lashing his anger to keep it raging. Quite as abruptly he ceased writing to Stella. He told himself that he ought to be grateful to her



for putting him wise; at the same time he found nothing to admire in the service she had rendered him, nor in her for the rendering of it. "Catty," the women would call it. *Barbara* never would have tattled as *Stella* had done! Jimmy knew it—a most inconsistent warmth about his heart.

Well, it didn't have to be *Stella*. There were other women—in Paris, especially. . . . Some of them he didn't like to think about afterward, and found himself thinking of *Barbara* instead: now of that Easter morning in the little gray church at home, when their eyes had met and flashed a message; now of the happy "crabbing parties" of childhood; again . . . . He had tried absinthe, and found that a little of it only made matters worse; he became lugubriously sentimental, and the only thing he could forget about *Barbara* was that he hated her. Whereupon he imbibed it in greater quantity, with somewhat better success, for he forgot not only *Barbara*, but also his own name and where he lived; and by the time he was able to remember these he felt really too ill to care whether he hated anybody or not. Then repentance following upon recovery plunged him into his work, and in this he found respite at last, for while he worked he neither loved nor hated.

So the four years had worn themselves away, and Jimmy was coming home to his empty house—empty, at least, of the presence that had made it home to him; back to the unavoidable meeting with the girl he had tried to forget and couldn't, whom he wanted to hate and wanted to hold once more in his arms. . . .

A letter from Father Christian which he received while in London, had something to do with his final decision to come on home and get it over

with. Not that the letter itself was urgent; Father Christian wrote of trivial matters: some books Mrs. Landridge had promised for the hospital, the dastardly deeds of the present "reform" administration in Red Haven, the price of peaches; not till the postscript did he speak of Jimmy's return, and then in enigmatic fashion: "I misdoubt whether you deserve it, but I'm praying for you, son, that kind Heaven *this once* may not recompense the fool according to his folly!"

*What had he meant?* He had written before, soon after Mrs. Landridge's death, a letter of sympathy and kindly feeling; Jimmy had replied; but this—Father Christian was not the man to write a letter simply to inform his correspondent of the exorbitant charges of the fruit merchants; the books for the hospital could wait, and Red Haven politics concerned Jimmy not at all. It was a hard nut to crack, and the kernel quite clearly lay in the postscript. So he came home, wondering. . . .

He had no intention of staying any longer than necessary. He would settle up his affairs and light out, back to Chicago, where a job and a welcome awaited him. If Father Christian meant—well, he wouldn't stay to complicate matters for old Amory; for old time's sake he supposed he owed Barbara that much, as well. Yes, he'd go at once. . . .

It was a sad homecoming for Jim Landridge, alighting at the dingy station, setting out on his dreary climb toward the house on the hill. The very elements seemed in league with his mood, for a day of fog and gloom had settled into a steady, persistent downpour. Plodding through the rain-splashed dusk, he thought gratefully of

Cousin Camilla's presence as he caught sight of the brightly lighted windows, though it was yet early; and he was touched and comforted by the preparations she had made for his coming. She fussed over him delightfully, and made him get out of his damp clothing and into house-coat and slippers before he ate the hot supper she had waiting. It certainly was very comfortable. Cousin Camilla's southern cooking, too; he hadn't thought that he was hungry, but he did eat! There was "smothered" chicken, and watercress, and sourwood honey, and cornbread made of white meal, and peaches and cream for dessert—a famous meal for a man fresh from four years of Continental food! Jimmy wondered, as he ate, who started that ancient superstition about the superiority of French cooks and French cookery, anyhow!

When, after supper, he settled down in his favorite chair with pipe and book, the while Cousin Camilla, scorning his proffered assistance, "did the dishes," it was with a distinct sense of the lightening of his burden of grief and loneliness. The kind soul continued to flutter about him in a chirrupy sort of way, patting his shoulder, bringing matches for his pipe—"Of cou'se you may smoke, as much as you like. Mind? Why, I love it!" and would not leave him until assured that not another thing could be done for his further comfort. And then she came back, after all, with the evening paper and a new magazine, still in its wrapper.

Jimmy glanced interestedly over the paper. Red Haven hadn't boasted an evening paper, nor indeed a daily of any kind, when he went away. The general news he already had read on the



train down from the city; so he turned at once to the "society" columns. Heavens! Who were all these people? Names he never had heard, many of them, and in only four years! Well, here was one that looked more familiar: "Miss Ethel Harbie entertained at luncheon and bridge. Among those present—h-m—Cordelia Smith, Jessie Spaulding, Mrs. Howard Ames"—well, well, that old bell-wether roped at last, eh? Clever girl, whoever she is!—h-mm—"May Lansing, Louise Wright, Anne Langman"—Huh! Used to call 'em Mamie, and Lulu, and Annie! Well, that seemed to be all, of the old crowd. . . . And here was an item about Bud Wilkinson—h-mm—"resume his studies at Princeton"—h-mm—must be Harry's kid brother. Why, great scott! He was in the grammar grades the last Jimmy knew!

Well, what else? Hello! Well, great mackerel! "William F. Smith, our up-to-date photographer, will specialize in children's portraits hereafter. He's got a boy of his own now, born September 11, weight eight pounds. Welcome to our city, William F., Jr.! Pass the cigars, Dad!"

Well, well! Old "Bull," eh? Have to hunt him up tomorrow and get in on those smokes! Jimmy grinned in anticipation. . . . Ah! "At a luncheon given today by the Misses Janet and Addie Patterson for Miss Stella Martine, the engagement of the guest of honor was announced in delightfully novel fashion—"

Jimmy's lips tightened in sudden pain; descended upon him all those memories he had fought so desperately, memories of the cruel thing she had told him—to this day he could not endure that choking odor of mingled drugs and chocolate; memories of Barbara—Ah! as well strive to

blot out every recollection of his boyhood, for the thought of her was entwined with each and every one!

He read on mechanically, making no sense of the words, till the closing sentence startled him out of his bitter abstraction: "Miss Martine's marriage to Prof. Chester Liddell, of Freebury, takes place late in October."

Jimmy read it twice to make sure he hadn't been mistaken. Incredulity gave way to astonishment, astonishment became amusement, till at last his whoop of mirth brought Cousin Camilla hurrying from the kitchen. He explained as well as he could";—but you'd have to see him and *know* her, to get the true inwardness of it, Cousin Camilla!"

He sobered quickly, however, when he was once more alone with his thoughts of the happy past. "Freak" Liddell, High School days, that old quarrel with Barbara over Chester. What an imbecile he, Jimmy, had been about it! Vividly he remembered that Saturday morning when he had gone to "make up"; he had found Barbara in the kitchen, making an apple pie for dinner. . . . The slender suppleness of the housewifely figure in its big blue apron, someway suggestive of home-of-your-own and little-dinners-for-two. . . . Barbara's face delicately flushed—with the heat of the kitchen, perhaps; floury hands deftly fitting the thin pastry into its tin; the big red apple she had tossed him in token of forgiveness. . . . The newspaper slipped from heedless fingers to sprawl untidily at his feet.

When at last he roused himself from his unhappy reverie, Jimmy's face had settled into certain hard lines that had marked it since he went

away. He turned listlessly to the magazine, tore off the wrapper—Ah! McKecknie's for October! Now the pages riffled through eager fingers; could there be—? Yes, here it was: "A Daughter of Ananias," by Barbara Thair!

Jimmy began to read, stirred by the same mixture of emotions, sad and sweet, which always beset him when he came upon the work of Barbara's pen. Why he did it he could hardly have told, but for two years and more, ever since the day he had stumbled on "Hey, Fellers!" in a chance-flung copy of *The Amulet*, he had bought every American magazine he saw, scanning their pages month by month, seeking the printed word that should tear afresh his yet unhealed wound. Most of the stories he knew by heart through many readings; not a few had been familiar to him long before they found their way into print. They were for the most part stories of boy-and-girl problems and struggles and fun, told with an understanding of boy-and-girl nature and an appreciative use of boy-and-girl idiom which had brought them instant popularity. Barbara wrote of what she knew; therein lay her success.

This story, however, was different, in a more serious vein. One of the characters Jimmy recognized at once as Stella Martine; Barbara's description of her hands, her way of using them, was inimitable. The hero was not so easily identified, nor the heroine; but as he read on, more and more absorbed, suddenly he met it like a blow between the eyes—the very sentence that once had set him aflame with consuming anger; anger at Barbara, who could welcome his kisses and then tell another girl that she had "used him where he'd do the most good"; anger at the girl to whom



he had given all his boyish heart, who had said in the moonlight "Always and forever, Jimsy, *your girl!*"—God!—and then to Stella Martine, "There's never been anything between us—never will be." The wording was almost identical. But in the story the heroine, jilted, had been goaded into repudiation of her lover by the other girl, the Stella one; while Barbara—*Had she?*

There had been no hint of it in anything Stella had said; but naturally—wait, the story! Ah! The Stella person in the story hadn't told that part of it, either!

And so *that* was the way it had been! Jimmy pondered, and read, and read and thought again, until it all grew clear to him at last, all that Barbara had tried to tell him. All, that is, but one thing: "Why should Barbara have minded any veiled taunts of Stella or anybody else, knowing as she did that they had no foundation in fact? It would have been more like the Barbara he knew to smile serenely, and let time show the world whether she had been "jilted" or not. Barbara *knew!* His letter would have made that very clear, if she had needed reassurance after what his lips had told her!

His letter! Something—a confused memory, a foreboding—clutched at his heart, sent him stumbling across the room to his mother's desk. No, no! That *could not* be! He wouldn't look. Yet he knew that he should look; he couldn't help it now. With hands that shook so that he could scarcely force them to their task, he pulled out and overturned the contents of pigeonhole and drawer, searching frantically, hoping he would find it, hoping he wouldn't . . . . God in Heaven! He stared at the envelope, at his own familiar

handwriting as he drew out the enclosure; a word here and there, a phrase, caught his eye: "Mother thinks—" "—will be sure that you understand—" "Darling, did *you* know love was like that?"

With a little broken cry, Jimmy's head went down amid the litter of papers, and he gave himself up to the bitterest half hour he had ever known.

It was so that Cousin Camilla found him. Supposing him to be tortured wholly by grief for his mother, she stood beside him for a space, her arm across his big shoulders.

"Oh, Jimmy-boy, you shouldn't have done this tonight!" she said, pityingly, when she could speak at all. "Tomorrow it might have been easier, and perhaps I could have helped—"

But Jimmy didn't hear, or else didn't understand, for he lifted a face that startled and shocked poor Miss Winslow; he spoke thickly and jerkily: "Cousin Camilla, I have to go out for a little while. I don't know how long I'll be gone—don't wait up for me—"

He rose, folding a letter and putting it in his pocket with awkward fumbling fingers, and was off upstairs before she could find words to dissuade him. A few moments later she heard the front door close, and in wonderment set about ordering the chaos of Cousin Esther's desk.

## XXI

St. Michael's clock was chiming ten as Jimmy rang the bell at the once-familiar door. In the old days he never rang, a loud war-whoop in the hall serving quite adequately to announce his arrival. He felt, however, that something rather more ceremonious was demanded after an absence, more or less clouded, of half a dozen years; so he rang the bell, his heart thumping with strange excitement, his ears strained to catch the sound of a certain light footfall. And then after all it was Aunt Cindy's step he heard, and Aunt Cindy's voice beginning, "Who—" as, having slid the chain bolt into place, she opened the door its allotted six inches.

"It's I, Aunt Cindy" He spoke quickly, and as quickly stepped within as she released the chain and swung back the door.

Jimmy!" Aunt Cindy gasped in astonishment. "*Jimmy!*"

He caught her hands and kissed her as of yore. "Aunt Cindy," he demanded, "where's Barbara?"

"She isn't here; but come in, come in!"

Aunt Cindy led the way into the living-room, so dearly familiar that the sight of its homely comfort hurt intolerably. Jimmy saw that she was trembling, and put an arm about her for support; nor did he remove it when she was seated on the broad couch with him beside her.

"I'm sorry if I frightened you, Aunt Cindy; I ought not to have come so late, but I guess I didn't think about the time at all, just so I got here!"

"Rather sudden, isn't it, this—uh—impatience?" she remarked dryly.



"Aunt Cindy, is it too late?"

But Aunt Cindy, instead of answering, turned swiftly upon him: "Jim, what did you do to my little girl?"

"I didn't, Aunt Cindy! It was what some one else did to me and to *my* girl; some one I trusted—"

"Not Amory!" exclaimed Aunt Cindy in quick defense.

"No, not Amory; if it had been Amory it wouldn't have been so hard to bear. Amory—wanted Barbara, but he played fair, always. Oh, Aunt Cindy! It was—it was—my mother!"

Aunt Cindy looked up, startled. Jimmy could not speak, and after a long moment of silence he slipped from the couch to kneel beside her, hiding his shamed face in the motherly shoulder as he so often had done when some boyish escapade had brought him her just rebuke. Tenderly she put an arm about him. For a time neither spoke; then Aunt Cindy, with the utmost gentleness: "Never mind, Jimmy-boy; whatever it was your mother did, you know she didn't do it to hurt you, but only because she thought it was best—for you; because she loved you. You know that, Jim!"

"I know," came the muffled voice from her shoulder; "but I can't understand—I *can't* see why she should have done this. She promised—oh, Aunt Cindy, must I? It seems as if I couldn't tell it, not even to you, Aunt Cindy!"

"Yes, Jim, I reckon you must!" replied Aunt Cindy, gently inexorable.

Oh, it was hard to begin! Jimmy worried a fold of her dress, pinching and creasing it with strong, nervous fingers, smoothing it out afterward, only to be at it again the next minute.

"You see it was this way, Aunt Cindy—" he began at last, then stopped. "Barbara's told you, hasn't she? Her side of it, I mean?"

"Not a word! Oh, I knew everything was all wrong, but I couldn't ask. I did try to make it easy for her to tell me, but Barbara is proud; she would be reticent about any hurt—of that kind—"

"Yes, she would; she would keep her troubles to herself, nurse her own wounds; she always did, when we were youngsters together. Well, then, the last time I was here, the night before I went to Chicago, six years ago—" he faltered, groping for words; "Barbara and I had a talk, and I told her—Well, I kissed her, Aunt Cindy; seems kinda funny, in a way, but I never had before, never once, not since we were little kids—and I told her how I felt about her. I don't remember whether anything was actually said—about getting married, you know; but I supposed Barbara *knew* I meant that. I supposed we were engaged; or at least I thought it was understood between us that we were to be, sometime. I believed it for two years—"

"But you didn't write!"

"When I got home that night and told Mother, there was a scene. She said we were much too young to think of being engaged; she wanted me to give Barbara up, but I wouldn't. She said for me to be tied up to a girl would interfere with my work and prospects, or something like that; it wasn't that she didn't like Barbara, Aunt Cindy," he broke off worriedly.

"Well, I should *hope* not!" bristled Aunt Cindy.

"Well, finally Mother put it to me in such a

way that I had to give in, partly; but I was to write Barbara a letter to explain, and I did, that very night. Mother wanted to see it to be sure it would do; she said it would be a hard letter to write, and I can tell you it was, all right!" Jimmy smiled crookedly. "So I left it for her to read and send to Barbara—" he was quite unable to finish.

"And she didn't?"

"I found it tonight, in her desk."

"And then—?"

"Oh, you can see how it must have looked to Barbara. As if I had kissed her and made love to her just to see if I could, and then had gone away—"

"Was that all?" prompted Aunt Cindy.

"No, I came back to see Barbara the very day I was twenty-one, as I promised in my letter; but before I had a chance to see her, somebody—a girl we both knew—told me something Barbara had said. Oh, I know now that Barbara didn't mean it; she said it because she was hurt and angry; I can't blame her now, but I did then, because I didn't know . . . I guess that's all, Aunt Cindy," he ended, lamely.

"Except that you went off in a huff, and never gave Barbara a chance to explain, nor to ask *you* to explain!"

"I didn't see how there could *be* any explanation. And I *was* sore. Why, see here, Aunt Cindy—don't think I'm trying to justify myself; I was a cad, if you like; I know I was all the different kinds of fool you could name, not to have had it out with Barbara then and there; but, Aunt Cindy, think! For two years I had thought it was all settled between us; I'd been thinking of Barbara



as *my girl*, and dreaming—and it was like a slap in the face, what I heard. So I went away. And I never knew the truth about it all, till tonight. Aunt Cindy,” he implored, “won’t you tell me, please, *where is Barbara?*”

Aunt Cindy did not reply at once. Instead, with a hand beneath Jimmy’s chin, she turned his troubled face to the light. “Let me look at you, Jim,” she commanded. “Six years is a long time, and I’ve got to make up my mind whether I will tell you, or not.”

Jimmy did as he was bid, his eyes meeting hers squarely, earnestly, though he flushed red to the tips of his ears.

Shrewd, loving Aunt Cindy saw much in the upturned face she scanned so narrowly. It was a man’s face now, instead of the smooth boyish one she remembered. Behind his present suffering she saw lines of disillusionment and regret; she read a story of temptation fought and overcome; she saw that he had come back clean, not with the untouched innocence of boyhood, but with the more significant virtue of the man who has tasted evil and voluntarily put aside the cup, choosing rather decency for its own sake. There was new strength in the line of the jaw, the mobile lips were set more firmly one upon the other; but Jimmy’s eyes were the same clear, frank, boyish ones that had always made him loved and trusted wherever he went.

Still Aunt Cindy had one more test. “Kept pretty straight, have you, Jim?” She asked the question almost casually.

Jimmy met her searching look unflinchingly. “I’m straight now, Aunt Cindy,” he answered.

Aunt Cindy smiled contentedly as she smoothed

the blond head. "I do think," she opined with seeming irrelevance, "that there's a train for Barnegat at seven-something in the morning; or, let me see—is it eight-something, I wonder?"

## XXII

Miss Thair had not yet arrived, the clerk at the Inlet House informed Jimmy. She had engaged a room by wire from New York, but might not be down before tomorrow. Certainly, plenty of rooms; a little late in the season, you know: "Front!"

Jimmy followed the boy, wondering how he could fill the hours till Barbara's coming; wondering what he should say to her when he did see her, and what she would say to him. He spent the morning roaming aimlessly about the hotel; smoked cigarettes innumerable; wrote a note to Cousin Camilla, assuring her of his safe arrival, though the journey down had consumed but a trifle more than an hour, and Cousin Camilla, so far as he knew, hadn't lost any sleep through worry over him when he was half a world away!

He got a timetable, looked up the trains by which Barbara could possibly arrive, and met them all; ate a disgracefully hearty lunch, everything considered; and having made another trip to the station and fidgeted about the lobby until seven old ladies and four old gentlemen fled to regions more tranquil, he suddenly recalled that there was an excellent ocean somewhere about, highly recommended for swimming and the like.

Buffeting the breakers proved exhilarating; he plunged into the rolling water beyond with keen enjoyment. Later, seeking a secluded spot, he stretched his splendid young body upon the sand in the warm September sunshine, and straightway



began paying Dame Nature's score for the sleepless night just past.

To Barbara, stepping from the hotel "bus," it seemed that she could hardly wait to get into the cool water. The journey down from New York had been intolerably hot and dusty, in spite of the fog and rain of the day before; a trying day it had been for Barbara and Uncle Ben, going about in the murky heat from bank to office and from office to store, attending to a dozen little matters for the whole family. And this morning, having bade Uncle Ben goodbye at the subway as he started for the ferry on his way home, she had spent a long hour with Mr. Craven, of McKechie's, discussing with him such of her published stories as were to be included in a little volume soon to be issued. Two or three, hitherto unpublished, awaited revision, and Barbara's coming down to this not too fashionable old hotel was primarily to work at this task.

Often before it had proved a haven of quiet and uninterrupted for the hatching of a plot, or for a period of rest and recuperation following some desperate orgy of work; for when genius burned Barbara joyously lit her candle at both ends, working with an intensity that left her exhausted mentally, and half dead for sleep. Today—oh, but she was tired today! Just tired through and through, body and mind and heart. And discouraged. What did it all amount to, after all? Scribbling her youth away, the golden days that pass but once—and Barbara was nearly twenty-four!

This was one of the times when the thought of Amory and his devotion was a powerful temptation to the woman's heart of her; one of the times when she would cheerfully have bartered all that

the years had brought of fame and of sheckels, even her hard-won serenity, for a single hour of the old happy companionship with Jimmy. She knew, of course, that the mood would pass, and she would be up and at her appointed task with all her accustomed satisfaction in work well done, rejoicing as before that hers was the power to lighten with a smile the cares that infest humanity's day. For a story from the pen of Barbara Thair was no lugubrious affair of plots and counterplots, of problems and evil passions and heartaches. Lightsome, folksy tales they were, clever and merry and whimsical; and the reader's smile of appreciation perforce expanded to a grin or a giggle, a chuckle or a shout, according to sex and temperament.

But these first few days Barbara meant to rest, to "loaf and invite her soul," to the end that she might come to her work with fresh courage and vigor. It was so good to be here! Barbara loved the sea; the tang of salt in the air was to her more delightful than any perfume of flower or forest or field. In later years, when the shores of Lake Michigan came to be her vacation playground, she found them most satisfactory as to waves and sand and scenery; but the water simply smelled like water, like sunshine and distant pines, and left her strangely discontent.

Now she drew deep breaths of the grateful saltiness, running lightly down the beach in the bathing suit hastily snatched from her luggage, making straight for the smooth swells beyond the line of breakers. She was too tired for very energetic swimming, but paddled contentedly about, revelling in the delicious coolness with a sense of sheer physical comfort and well-being.

Afterward she played handball with some small boys until she was quite dry, and more than willing to rest and read the magazine she had hidden, with her steamer rug, in a safe place she knew of old. And there, in the lee of a group of rocks which once had formed part of an old breakwater, she settled herself comfortably for a half hour of delight in the company of one O. Henry, the joy of her life and her everlasting despair.

But scarcely had she become thoroughly absorbed in the adventurous mishaps of Mr. Jefferson Peters, when she was startled by a peculiar sound from beyond the adjacent rocks. The sound was such as might be uttered by a human being of the masculine persuasion, in the event of a painful degree of pressure being applied to, say, a great toe. "Oh! Ow! *Ouch!*" ejaculated the hidden voice, immediately adding a forceful and unmistakable "Damn!"

Barbara raised her head to listen in wondering amusement. There was a scramble, a grunt of relief, and again the voice, the sound of which brought her bolt upright, though all it said was, "Why, you little son-of-a-sea-cook, you!"

Then from behind the screening rocks uprose a tall young Viking in a bathing suit, a half grown crab held firmly and expertly in his right hand. One second later the adolescent crustacean was sailing through space in the general direction of Liverpool, and the Viking turned—and stopped—and stared. A young woman was sitting there in the sand, looking in her short bathing skirt absurdly like a little girl he used to know. Except that *she* had been tinted like the wild rose, while this one was strangely white, as white as the sand at her feet. An eternity or so they stared.



Then Barbara bowed her head to shut out the sight of him passing by, with no word or sign of recognition. Oh, if only he would *go*, go quickly!

Thus it was that she did not see him coming swiftly toward her, clearing the intervening rocks like a boy playing at leapfrog; didn't see the outstretched arms until they gathered her in, rug, magazine and all. . . .

The sun was all of an hour nearer the western treetops before they could speak sanely or even coherently. Jimmy's lips had sought hers again and again, as a thirsty traveler drinks at a wayside spring. His conversation, while hardly to be called brilliant, was eminently satisfactory to Barbara Ann, consisting for the most part of repetitions of her name, with variations, whispered close against her cheek, now no longer strangely white, but tinted like the wild rose. They clung together, blissfully oblivious of possible onlookers, each reading unutterable things in the eyes of the other; swept by waves of feeling that blotted out sand and sea and sky, leaving only these two, together, in all the universe.

When at last consistent speech was possible, Jimmy found words to tell her about the letter; and then Barbara tried to make him understand just what she had said to Stella, and why, but he stopped her speech with kisses.

"Oh, my Barbara girl!" he grieved; "to think of all the cruel, wasted years, the heartaches—"

"But it's all right now, Jimsy; *everything* is all right now!" she comforted.

"And you can forgive us both, my mother and me?"

"Jim, dear," Barbara spoke softly, as in the

presence of the dead, and her words paraphrased Aunt Cindy's, "Your mother—it was for you she did it, for your best happiness as she saw it; because she loved her boy. . . . She was so dear and sweet to me, Jimsy, as though she were sorry and wanted to make amends. You mustn't grieve about it; *that's* all right, too."

So were Jimmy's wounds healed, and Barbara's with them, for Jimmy declared that after all he rather admired her "spunk" in repudiating a lover as generally reprehensible as he must have seemed to her. "But, sweetheart, how could you believe it of me? Didn't you know me better, after all our years together?"

"I don't know, Jim; I hardly understand it myself, in the light of—today! For that matter, didn't *you* know *me* better? How could you think I'd make a speech like that, so hateful—and oh, so utterly untrue, Jimmy!—if something hadn't happened to drive me plum crazy?"

"I guess I didn't think about it at all," Jimmy replied, soberly. When I heard it I simply 'saw red,' I suppose, just as you must have done when you said it. Ah, well! Who cares now, anyway?"

It seemed Barbara didn't, nor Jimmy either; and since nobody else mattered in the least, they settled it most amicably between them in another interval of beatific detachment from earth and the things thereof.

"Going in again?"

Barbara considered. "Race you to the float!"

They were off like two children, charging down the sandy beach, plunging through the surf, striking out strongly for the goal. Barbara was no mean antagonist, but Jimmy's superior strength soon out-distanced her, and he sat at ease on

the edge of the platform when she came up, gasping, sputtering, laughing, to perch beside him. He welcomed her as though the width of the Atlantic had separated them instead of a paltry dozen yards; it was well, perhaps, that they had the float and its environs quite to themselves at the moment!

Together they slipped from the raft and swam shoreward side by side. "Bet I can beat you dressing, too!" he boasted, pulling her from beneath a huge comber that threatened to annihilate them both.

Barbara disdained the proffered wager, laughing gayly back at him over her shoulder as they ran up the beach. Jimmy could almost have sworn that she even "made a snoot" as of old!

However, his jubilant haste to get himself into the proper dinner-time habilaments of civilized man availed him little. Fully thirty minutes had he cooled his heels, though not his ardor, ere she came to him in the lobby, glowing, radiant, a new and enchanting Barbara; with all the dear sweetness of the old, and something more, intangible yet unmistakable—the mingling of charm and its sterner brother, character, which suffering and achievement had wrought from the plastic material of the girl's gentle nature.

"You kept me waiting purposely, you know you did!—*you darling!*" he added in a whisper. "Wasn't six years enough, that you must pile on another eternity like this last half hour?"

Barbara smiled inscrutably, but her eyes were all shy tenderness and half-unbelieving joy.

They dined, though what they ate or whether they ate, they knew no more than you or I. Afterward they walked and talked long beneath the



stars; there was so much to tell of the past, so much to plan for the future. Jim was all for an immediate marriage, but Barbara demurred; she didn't want to miss the fun of being engaged. "Just for a little while, Jimsy!" she begged.

"It will have to be a *very* little while, then, sweetheart," Jimmy at last agreed. If I want that job with Harper, and maybe some day *my* name in gilt letters on the door, I'll have to be in Chicago within a month at the latest. They gave me until the first to wire acceptance, and I ought to be there by the fifteenth. And *this* time I'm not going without my girl, you can just bet your sweet life on that!"

There was the question of Barbara's writing. She must go on with it, Jimmy declared. Gee, it wasn't every fellow could have a little celebrity in his home! When was she going to do her novel?

To which Barbara replied, "When I'm forty, Jimsy, not before!"

"You see, Jim," she explained, seriously, "I know as well as anyone that what I've written isn't *great*. It's amusing, and to a degree convincing, because I've written of the things I know, out of my own experience; and I'm going to continue writing such just as long as people like 'em and the publishers will buy 'em. But a novel—I'm going to *live* my novel first, with you, Jimsy; and then we'll see!"

Once the strains of a two-step from the hotel ballroom sent them rollicking over the sand, hard-packed by the receding tide, while Jimmy hummed the air with the orchestra. Barbara stopped short, struck by a sudden staggering thought. "Jim, what about your music? You haven't let it drop entirely, have you?"

“ 'Fraid so!” was the half-rueful reply. “Oh, well, cheer up!” he concluded comfortably; “it didn’t make so much of a splash at that!”

Then with a grin, “Maybe when we get to Chicago, and they find out at Saint Whosoever’s what a puffickly wondafil voice I’ve got, and what a close shave grand opera had from having me burst into it—well, maybe they’ll let me sing in the choir now and then, just enough to buy shoes for the baby! . . . What’s that? Say it again, Honey! . . . I sure do, dear—half a dozen of ’em!”

## XXIII

They went home next day, for of course Aunt Cindy must know at once, and Uncle Ben. There were matters of importance, too, requiring their presence in town without delay; the engagement ring, for one thing, and Jimmy's affairs to be arranged, and plans for the wedding—a month isn't a very long time in which to prepare wedding gown and trousseau, however unpretentious. Barbara was childish enough, she said, to want a real wedding, with a white dress and a veil and orange blossoms, and bridesmaids, and the organ playing the bridal chorus from "The Rose Maiden" very softly, and all the people she loved there to see her married.

"But simple; oh, *very* simple!" she protested, at Jimmy's expression of panic. And she meant to ask Stella Martine to be one of her bridesmaids.

"For heaven's sake, *why?*" demanded Jimmy.

"Well, because!" Barbara answered; and further elucidated, "and then, besides!"

In spite of the promised simplicity, Jimmy became more and more nervous as the day drew near. His years abroad had precluded his officiating as "best man" or otherwise, at the weddings of his friends, as would inevitably have been his lot had he been at home. In fact he had attended very few weddings in all his life, and his ignorance of the machinery of the ceremony was monumental. As to the fee, for instance: Did Uncle Ben think twenty dollars, or perhaps twenty-five,



a sufficient sum? Well, of course he didn't mean just that; thousands wouldn't be enough, but what was customary?

Uncle Ben advised him to curb his generosity at twenty dollars, or even ten; hadn't Jimmy heard about Mr. Seabrooke's weak heart?

Then Jimmy wanted to know whether he should give the money to Mr. Seabrooke before or after the ceremony, and must he hand it to him in person or was that part of Amory's job? And was it etiquette to put it in an envelope, or would Mr. Seabrooke—er—take it *raw*?

Uncle Ben's roar of laughter brought a responsive grin to Jim's sober face; the older man offering as his opinion, when he could get his breath, that Mr. Seabrooke or any other clergyman of his acquaintance would be apt to "take it" in any form in which it might be offered. "Give it to him in pennies if you like, Jim!" he chuckled.

They were married on Jim's birthday, "to take the curse off," Jimmy explained somewhat ambiguously. Stella Martine, in her bridesmaid's gown of softest rose, looking a trifle pale in the shadow of her wide-brimmed hat, thought the wedding a very plain affair indeed, and not to be compared to the general sumptuousness planned for her own nuptials, now a fortnight distant. Which was exactly as Barbara wished it.

Indeed, practically everything about her wedding suited Barbara Ann to a dot. The pretty little church was trimmed as for any simple service, with Barbara's favorite pink roses on altar and pulpit rail. Barbara's gown and veil were simplicity itself, so that to Jimmy she might seem no "apparition strange and fair," but just "his girl," the dear playmate of all his years. Ethel

Harbie, as maid of honor, was more like an apple-blossom than ever, her blonde beauty gleaming pearl-like beside Amory's dark faultlessness. The other bridesmaids were replicas of Stella Martine, barring the pallor and the touch of half-envious criticism; to them it was a day of days, a joyous interlude, a foretaste of one hoped-for day in the life of each.

And there was dear Uncle Ben to give the bride away; there were Aunt Cindy and Cousin Camilla crying comfortably together in a front pew, and Father Christian looking very happy in a rear one; and Jimmy saying "I, James, take thee, Barbara," in a very shaky voice, though his eyes were as clear and steady and worshipping as ever.

No one saw Aunt Annameel at first, though Barbara had gone twice to Hepzibah House to insist on her presence, without fail. Barbara couldn't bear that any of her own people should feel left out, unwanted, on this day, and Aunt Cindy had spoken to the ushers, that Aunt Annameel might be seated with "the bride's family." Still she had not appeared; oh, dear, Barbara would be so disappointed—

However, Aunt Annameel was there! She had arrived very early, accompanied by Miss Mattie and Miss Sarah; had found a seat far to one side; and with a Hepzibah on either hand, awaited the beginning of such heathenish rites as might constitute a marriage among the Pharisees.

She was surprised, almost disappointed, at the brevity and simplicity of the service, the entire absence of the circus tricks she had expected to witness. There was, to be sure, an element of the cut-and-dried, but that was to be expected in a church that read its prayers—imagine! And that,



Aunt Annameel herself was able to mitigate to some extent, and to introduce a spontaneity otherwise lacking.

She chose that hushed moment between the last *Amen* and the first notes of the wedding march, and in a voice that carried clearly to the farthest corners of the church, cried out "Praise the Lord!" in the best Hepzibah manner. Miss Mattie and Miss Sarah were not far behind, one contributing a vigorous "Amen!" and the other a resounding "Glory! Halleluia!"—which last, however, was partially lost in a great crash of chords from the organ. Mr. Nichols, though fairly stunned by the unseemly occurrence, rose to the occasion with the loudest stops at his command; and never before had bridal party swept down the aisle of St. Barnabas' with such spirited abandon. Further solemnity was out of the question. Bridesmaids and ushers with difficulty restrained their mirth; Barbara and Jimmy dared not raise their eyes; guests craned for a glimpse of Aunt Annameel and her singular friends, still nodding their satisfaction. It became the standing joke of Barbara's married life; for Jimmy never ceased to remind her, on occasion, of her family's publicly-expressed relief at getting her married off at last!

And what a jolly breakfast it was, when at last the pent-up hilarity could have its way! How wonderful Grandma Ferriss looked, all in black lace, at the head of the table, telling a story of her own wedding day as Barbara cut the bride-cake! How they all laughed at the vision conjured up by the old lady, of herself as a bride of seventy years ago, marching up the aisle on the arm of Great-grandfather Hanchell, a pair of red woollen bed-



room slippers peeping from beneath the stiff satin skirt of her bridal gown, while the buckled ones of gleaming satin, left to be donned at the last minute because of their torturing snugness, sat in lonely grandeur beside her dressing glass at home!

How their laughter grew to shrieks of glee when Ethel Harbie bit upon something hard in her piece of cake, and triumphantly held up to view the coveted band of gold "for the next bride!" How Amory went suddenly white when she handed it to him with an offhand request to keep it for her, please; she hadn't any pocket, and it was bad luck to put it on her finger—*yet!*

And then Barbara, half way up the stairs, was tossing her bouquet toward a dozen upraised hands. Ethel and Stella and Bessie Paige each "almost got it," but it slipped from their grasp and fell to the floor, whence it was snatched and borne exultantly away by Thankful Cordelia Jennie May Smith amid much merriment.

And the crowd scurrying off to the station, well primed with rice and confetti and disreputable footwear, while Barbara and Jim were dressing; and Amory, with Ethel beside him, bringing around his big, new, shining, dark-red automobile, kept a profound secret until that moment, to whirl them to the junction two stations away; their non-appearance at train time being the first intimation of fiasco to the excited watchers at the home "depot."

And here was the train at last, and the two young men were clasping hands while the girls kissed affectionately. The escaping bride and groom sent messages of derision to the disappointed crowd; and at the very last, as the train

rolled out of the station, Jimmy called gleefully from the steps, "Hey, Amory! You and Ethel better come to Chicago on *your* honeymoon!"

Hands and hats and handkerchiefs were waved, till there was nothing left to wave at except the landscape. Then Amory, white and very serious, turned to Ethel, whose eyes were like twin stars. "Well, how about it, Eth?" he asked.

So were the gates of all the Yesterdays fast-closed behind these four, and they stood at last within the Garden of Tomorrow.

THE END















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